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## Easter in St. Paul's

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# Easter in St. Paul's

SERMONS

BEARING CHIEFLY ON THE RESURRECTION OF  
OUR LORD

BY

H. P. LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L., LL.D.

LATE CANON AND CHANCELLOR OF ST. PAUL'S

*Surrexit Dominus verè. Alleluia*

NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION

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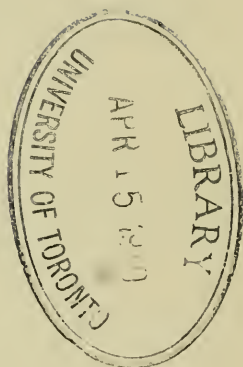
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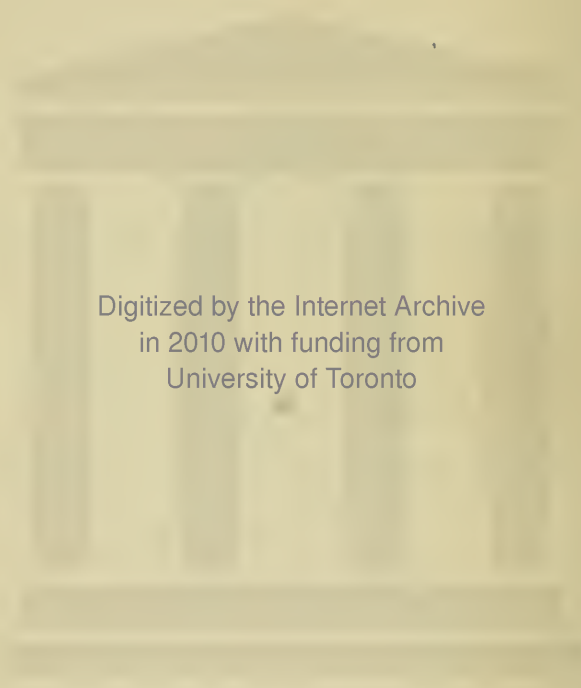
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TO  
THE VERY REVEREND  
RICHARD WILLIAM CHURCH, D.C.L.  
DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S  
WHOSE TENURE OF HIS HIGH OFFICE HAS BEEN  
NOT LESS A BLESSING TO LONDON  
THAN A CONSTANT SOURCE OF THE TRUEST HAPPINESS  
TO THOSE OVER WHOM HE MORE  
IMMEDIATELY PRESIDES.



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## *PREFACE TO THE NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION*

(As prepared by the Author in 1889.)

THE two volumes of these Sermons in preceding editions, are now, by the employment of a smaller type, fused into one, but, it is hoped, without any such loss of distinctness as would counterbalance the advantage of a reduced cost.

3, AMEN COURT, E.C.,  
*Advent, 1889.*

## *PREFACE*

THESE Sermons are published in deference to the wishes of many persons to whom from time to time they have been useful. As here arranged, they can make very little pretence to system; and, from the nature of the case, they often repeat each other, in substance if not in words. Some of them, however, are

bound up with the formation or recovery of religious convictions in a manner and degree which exert a first claim on the author's consideration ; and this has made him unwilling to omit passages, or even entire discourses, which a true literary judgment would have proscribed.

It ought perhaps to be added that the 35th Sermon was preached in St. Paul's, at the invitation of the late Dean Milman, and at a date when the preacher had not become a member of the Chapter.

If this volume should prove to be at all generally acceptable, the author might hereafter publish other Sermons preached during his Residences at St. Paul's since February, 1870, in the months of August and December. Of these, the latter would relate, for the most part, to our Lord's First and Second Coming. The former would deal with a wider range of subjects, although generally such as are suggested, however incidentally, by the Services of the Church.

3. AMEN COURT, ST. PAUL'S,  
*St James's Day, 1885.*



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## SERMON I.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION.

I COR. XV. 19.

*If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

ST. PAUL, in this great passage, makes Christianity answer with its life for the truth of our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain."<sup>1</sup> He would not write in this way unless he had in view a temper of mind which made a statement thus explicit and startling not less than necessary.

The Greek converts at Corinth entertained objections to the Resurrection which were suggested by the philosophical habits of thought of their earlier, unconverted life. They could not make out to themselves a satisfactory physical theory of the Resurrection. "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"<sup>2</sup> St. Paul answers these questions so far as the occasion required; and he then goes on to a point of even graver importance. For these Greeks, in their airy, light-hearted, careless manner, would seem to have suggested that it did not matter very much whether the Resurrection were true or not; that the Resurrection, however interesting, was not the central feature in the Christian creed; that even if man is not to rise hereafter, and if Christ did not rise on the third day from the dead, Christianity has already done, and will yet do, very much for man in this life to subdue and chasten his passions, to sweeten his temper, to make duty welcome and sorrow bearable, and the relations of men with each other kindly and unselfish. These Greek converts, who had as yet so much to learn about Christianity, would suggest that the Resurrection was a matter of merely

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. xv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 35.

intellectual interest, lying outside the real, beneficent and moral action of Christianity : so that even if the Apostle who preached it was wrong, and if they who questioned it were right, there was no reason for discomfort as to the claims or worth of Christianity as a whole. Christianity was really, they thought, independent of the question, and would survive it.

This is the position upon which St. Paul is making war ;—with which, in fact, he will make no terms whatever. He will not allow that the question of our Lord's Resurrection, and of the general Resurrection, which is attested by it, is for Christianity anything less than vital. It is not that he himself is, after all, only a Jew in Christian guise, who cannot enter into the subtle and delicate analysis, to which Greek thought must fain submit all subjects which come before it. It is not that as a keen dialectician he enjoys the intellectual pleasure of forcing men to look their premises in the face ; of making them accept unforeseen and possibly unwelcome conclusions, to which they had by implication committed themselves. It is that, for him, Christianity is bound up with the Resurrection as with a fact inseparable from its existence. He cannot detach Christianity from this truth, after the fashion of those off-hand Corinthians ; if the Resurrection goes, Christianity goes too ; it vanishes in its essence, and as a whole. A Christ who did not rise is not the Illuminator, or the Redeemer of men, and the world is still without deliverance from its darkness and its sin.<sup>1</sup> And a reason for this is that Christianity, as St. Paul thinks of it, is a great venture.<sup>2</sup> It is a venture staked upon the eternal future. It bids men lay out their time, and dispose of their lives, and order their daily action<sup>3</sup> on the supposition,—the tremendous supposition, which it treats as certain,—that this life is but a preface, and a very short preface, to another, and an endless life, that will follow. And the warrant for doing this is that Christ has risen from the dead,<sup>4</sup> and has thus shown us by a demonstration addressed to sense not only or chiefly that death is not the end, but that He is Lord of the world beyond the grave ;<sup>5</sup> that He has the keys of hell and of death.<sup>6</sup> But if this warrant is unsubstantial ; if this venture is unwarranted ; if in this life only we have hope in Christ ; we have indeed made a capital mistake, and are of all men most miserable.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv 14, 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 30-32.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 25, 26.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 32-34.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. i. 18.

## I.

What then is the hope respecting a future which we owe to our Risen Lord?

Is it the hope that we shall exist for ever? Is our continuous existence hereafter altogether dependent upon faith in and communion with the Risen Christ? Shall we be annihilated, if we die out of His grace, and hear His sentence of condemnation passed upon us?

No, brethren, this is not what the Apostle meant. Our immortality is not a gift of the Redeemer; it is the gift of the Creator. It is just as much part of our being as are any of the limbs of our bodies, or as is reason, imagination, or any other of the natural endowments of our minds.

Observe that belief in a future state does not begin with Christianity. It is as deeply rooted in the human soul as belief in God. It is found among mankind, here in considerable strength, there faint and indistinct. But, in some sense, it is wellnigh universal. The honour so widely paid to the graves of ancestors is a natural expression of belief in their survival after death. Those tombs in Etruria, upon which the earliest art of Italy lavished its best, did not merely mean that the dead lived on in the memory of survivors; but that in the belief of survivors, they were actually living in another world, and had, according to the rude notions of the time, to be honoured and provided for. It was this belief which made an ancient Egyptian deem the due embalming and preparation of his mummy the most important thing that could happen to him: it was this belief which built the Pyramids, and which conferred its strange power on the ancient Egyptian priesthood, who were less active as ministers to the living than as the accredited guardians of the dead: it was faith in immortality which rendered the Greek mysteries of Eleusis so welcome to those upon whom the old popular religion had lost its power, and which made great thinkers, such as Plato, at least in their higher moods, capable of thoughts and aspirations which Christians, in all ages, have welcomed as almost anticipating their own.

For without a Revelation, man suspects, if he does not certainly know, himself to be an immortal being. He has this idea of immortality in his mind: whence did he get it? He sees around him the incessant energy of death: he knows that

he is on the road to die ; he calls himself in nearly all the known languages of the race, a mortal ; as if this predestination to death were his governing characteristic. And yet he has within him a consciousness of which he cannot divest himself, that he is also something that will not die with the death of his body. My brethren, human reason can satisfy itself that the soul is a distinct thing from the body. The human body is made up of a number of organs, and each of these organs of an indefinite number of particles physically distinct from each other ; and as we gaze on the decomposition of a body after death, we see before our eyes the separation between these always separable particles gradually establishing itself. Whereas that in us which thinks, which loves, which resolves, is certainly and absolutely one and the same indivisible thing. The spiritual force in us which wills, is also that which feels, and that which thinks ; there are not in us three beings, thinking, feeling, and resolving, but one being or person conscious of its indestructible unity while performing these several operations. Thus the soul knows itself to be distinct from the body, by this consciousness of being indivisibly one ; but it also knows this by its consciousness of possessing permanent identity. The material of the body is always changing ; each day it is losing some particles, it is assimilating others ; the elements of which it is composed are constantly disappearing and as constantly being renewed, like the volume of water which fills the bed of a great river. They say that in seven years, every particle of a single body will have changed. And although the form, the stature, the countenance remain, yet, with time, these also are modified ; man loses the outward semblance of his former self. But how different is it with the soul ! Whatever may be the vicissitudes of its secret history, whatever its sorrows or its aspirations, whatever its intolerable burdens, or its buoyant hopes ; whether it be contemplating the present, or recalling the past, or endeavouring to pierce the veil of the future, it knows itself to be ever the same ; nay, this persistent sameness of which it is thus conscious in the midst of change, is the very basis of its idea of time. Thus it is clear that the causes which bring about the dissolution of a divisible and ever-changing organism like the human body would not touch the existence of an indivisible and permanently identical being like the soul : and that, although, as Kant remarks, the soul might conceivably perish by a gradual languor or extinction of its vital force, or as others have suggested by a fiat of the Almighty

Creator, there is no producible reason for thinking that it will do so. On the other hand, since the death of the body cannot be presumed to affect it, there are strong reasons for anticipating its enduring life. In nothing do we more nearly touch the consciousness of immortality than in our sense of carrying within us much that never attains completeness here. The more we reflect upon the capacity of the different gifts and powers of the mind, and upon their imperfect satisfaction in this present state ; the more we become interested in adding to what we know, and in trying to discover a purpose in it ; the more we make efforts to attain moral excellence, and find, in doing so, that we have become conscious of entering upon new spheres of existence which before were hidden from us,—the more certain we are that we must live hereafter. In short, we have within us an appetite for or sense of the Infinite ; and it never can be satisfied within the narrow bounds of our earthly existence. Above all, deeply implanted in our nature is the idea of justice and of duty in relation to it. Justice is wholly unsatisfied within the limits of this earthly existence ; and as we acquire a stronger sense of its certainty and its imperativeness as a law of the universe, and of the Being Who made and Who rules us, so do we become increasingly certain that there must be a future state in which the demands of justice will be satisfied.

## II.

We look forward then, as reasonable beings, to immortality. But to what sort of immortality does this anticipation point ?

Is it the immortality of the race ? Does the individual really perish at death, and ought he, if he be humble and unselfish, to be satisfied with knowing that humanity survives ? No ; this is not the immortality to which we men look forward. The immortality of the race ! Is it anything more than a phrase ? What does it mean ? It means the succession, indefinitely prolonged, of a countless number of totally distinct beings of a single type. Each single being dies : but the type, the resemblance between them, survives. How is this shadowy survival entitled to the name of immortality ? A race of beings does not live, apart from the individuals which compose it ; and therefore when we talk of its immortality we are the victims of a phrase of rhetoric. Only a person,—the reflecting and resolving centre of individual life,—can be properly immortal ; the



indefectibility of the type of animal to which he belongs is no more to him than would be the imperishableness of the earth or the sky, or the indestructibility of matter, if indeed these expressions could represent anything real.

Is it then an immortality of fame? Is the yearning of a human soul to be satisfied by the knowledge that after death its virtues will live in the memory of posterity? But how many in each generation can hope to share in such an immortality as this? How many of us are called to positions, to actions, to sacrifices, of such importance that they command the attention of more than a handful of men? How many of us will have a place in the public memory and, as the phrase goes, live in history? For most of us life is made up of little duties,—very necessary to be performed, often performed with effort and suffering,—but of so humble a kind that they hardly have a place in our own memories from day to day, much less in those of others. The Gospel indeed says that these duties are the scene of our probation no less truly than are the historical actions of kings and statesmen. But if there is no life after death, and the one immortality is that of fame, what is to become of them, that is, what is to become of this kind of immortality in the case of the greater part of the human race? Is not this immortality only a perpetuation of inequalities which disfigure our earthly life, and of which a future of absolute truth and justice would know nothing? Does it not consecrate all the successful ambitions, all the unworthy or hypocritical careers which have made a noise in the world, while it condemns virtues whose only crime is that they have been secret? Have we not here a reversal of that saying of our Lord's, which pierces so deep into the conscience of mankind, that one day "the last shall be first, and the first last"?<sup>1</sup>

Is it then an immortality of our good deeds? To say that a man lives in his good actions may be Christian language: it is said, we know, of the dead who die in the Lord, that "their works do follow them."<sup>2</sup> To this day the saints of the Bible history live in the works which are recorded of them. Even the smallest act when instinct with noble motive may, like Magdalene's anointing the Feet of the Redeemer, endure after the lapse of intervening ages, as a power in human life. But there are actions in all true and saintly lives which are known only to God, and which, so far as we can see, have no certain

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xx. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xiv. 13.

consequences here on earth. There are lives of unwitnessed, unmentioned, patient suffering ; there are good deeds, carefully disguised even from the suspicion of those who benefit by them. Christians know that these are not lost ; that they leave indelible traces on the soul of the agent ; that they are recorded before God. But if the soul perishes at death what becomes of them ? in what sense are they immortal ?

And are our good deeds our only deeds ? Have not our evil deeds—some of them—consequences ; and do these consequences punish the agent, if he really perishes at death ? What shall we say of writings which destroy faith in virtue and reverence for truth ? or of acts, which make the lives of others miserable, or which cannot be recalled without the contagion which is inseparable even from their memory ? The writer, the agent, has ceased to exist, so we are told, at death. To say that he is punished by the actions which thus survive him is to toy with language. Others than he are punished : the innocent whom he has defamed ; the believing whom he has robbed of their hope ; the relations whom he has condemned to an association with infamy ; the young or the unprotected whom he has first introduced to the knowledge of evil. No ; the immortality of our actions is not an immortality which satisfies the yearnings of the heart of man,—since this yearning is based always and especially on its sense of justice.

There are many well-intentioned people who think to honour our Lord and Saviour by referring altogether to Him both the belief in and the gift of immortality. May God bless them for their motive, and save them from their error ! The truth of immortality is taught us, at least indistinctly, by our natural reason : the fact of our immortality is part of the natural endowment with which we issue, each one of us, from the hands of the Creator. Do not let us think to honour the teaching of Revelation by depreciating that of reason ; or to exalt the blessings of Redemption at the expense of God's love and bounty as displayed in creating us. Our knowledge of immortality is older than the Gospel ; and our possession of it is independent of the work of Jesus Christ.

What then is the hope in Christ, which redeems Christian life from the failure and misery alluded to in the text ? It is the hope, that through His precious Death and His glorious Resurrection, our inevitable immortality will be an immortality of bliss.

Of course, it is not denied that He has "brought life and immortality to light."<sup>1</sup> For multitudes before He came it was a vague and dreary anticipation: He has made it a blessed and welcome certainty. He has familiarised us with the idea, that all live unto God; that belief in God, as the God of the ancient dead, carries with it belief in their permanent individual existence;<sup>2</sup> and He has further taught the future resurrection of the body, as completing the life beyond the grave.<sup>3</sup> He thus has altogether removed the question of life after death from the region of speculation into that of certainty, founded upon experience; since when He rose from death and presented Himself to the senses of those who saw Him, He was Himself but the first-fruits from the dead.<sup>4</sup> But the hope in Christ is something more than this conviction; it is the hope of a *blessed* immortality. This He has won for us by His one Perfect and Sufficient Sacrifice on the Cross, whereby our sins are blotted out, and the grace of His Spirit and His New Nature is secured to us in His Church, so as to fit us, by sanctification, for His eternal Presence. That His Cross has this virtue is proved to us by His Resurrection from the dead; that He lives in order that we may live also,<sup>5</sup> is the basis of our hope in Him.<sup>6</sup> Apart from this conviction, Christianity is indeed a worthless dream; the efforts and sacrifices of the Christian life are wasted; we are the victims of a great delusion; we are of all men most miserable.

### III.

There are signs in our day that faith in a future after death is less taken for granted than was the case a generation ago.

One of these signs is the increased number of suicides all over Europe. As to the fact, I fear, there can be no question. There are not merely the pathetic suicides of the very wretched, who in a paroxysm of suffering close their eyes to the desperate nature of their attempt to escape from it: there are the suicides of votaries of pleasure, who having exhausted all the faculties of enjoyment, are, as one has said, sated with life, and would throw it away like a toy which has ceased to please. Suicides like these are the crimes of old civilisations: they are almost unknown in the young fresh life of a nation or

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> St. John vi. 40.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 19.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xx. 37, 38.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. viii. 10, 11.



a race. They mean, that the opportunities for enjoyment have in certain classes outrun the power to enjoy ; that wealth, luxury, splendour, which seem so enviable to those who do not share them, only make the sense of moral lassitude and fatigue more intolerable, when they no longer please ; only augment the desire to escape from life,—with as little pain as may be,—into an existence with new sensations, or, if it might be, into annihilation. Suicides are only possible, when through continuous enervation of the moral nature, the awful realities of immortality have been lost sight of : and their increase is a serious symptom of what must be passing in large classes of minds.

While the hours of last year, 1882, were running out, an event of European importance, as we now know, was taking place. The most powerful man in France was dying. And one of the first events in this present year upon which the eyes of Europe were fixed was Gambetta's funeral. Everything was done that could be done by a grateful country to give it political importance. The State paid the expenses, and nothing on the same scale of splendour and publicity had been seen in Paris since Morny was buried. And, among other noticeable circumstances in connection with it, *this* was especially noticeable ; that throughout the proceedings, nothing was said or done to imply that man lives after death, or that God, or the religion which binds us to Him, are entitled to notice.

It could not be but that such a circumstance would command much and anxious attention, from Christians as well as from the opponents of Christianity. The latter, in this country as elsewhere, insisted upon its significance. It was the first instance, they said, of a total disregard of profession of faith in a future at the funeral of a European politician of the first rank. Even Robespierre had been eager to proclaim his belief in immortality : and many a man in high position who, like Talleyrand, during life might have repudiated the claims of religion, had welcomed its ministers when on the bed of death, and had been interred amid the words of hope, the prayers, the benedictions, which are so dear to Christians. Of the religious worth of this tardy or posthumous honour to religion, I am not now speaking :—Gambetta's funeral may have been, in a terrible sense, sincere. But the significant thing is that such an event should have been possible. It meant a great deal first and immediately for France, and then, more remotely, for Europe. It showed that, in our day, on an occasion of national

importance, a great people in the heart of Christendom could officially look death in the face, and ignore everything that follows it.

Much seems to show that in the modern world two entirely different beliefs about man are confounded with each other.

According to one of these, man is really only the highest of the beasts that perish. He is much more accomplished than any of the other beasts ; he has somehow developed qualities and capacities which enable him to master them ; he occupies a position in nature, and makes her subserve his purposes, after a fashion to which they can lay no pretension. But in the end it is much the same with him as with them. If they vanish utterly with the decay and death of their bodies, so does he ; and his case only differs from theirs in that extinction is more pathetic when there is so much more to lose and to deplore. As the old sceptic in Ecclesiastes says : "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts ; as the one dieth, so dieth the other ; yea, they have all one breath ; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast : for all is vanity. All go unto one place ; for all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."<sup>1</sup> Opposed to this idea of man, as an accomplished animal which perishes outright at death, is the Christian belief that man differs from the lower creatures altogether, except in the fact, that he owns a body, which is governed, chemically and physiologically, by the same laws as theirs. For man, his body, instead of being the substantive and central part of his being, is an appendage. Man is really a spirit with a body attached to it ; a body in which he works out his probation here, and which, after parting with it at death, he will receive in a spiritualised form hereafter. The soul of man no more dies when it leaves the body, than the musical genius which makes that organ do so much to aid the devotion of God's people in this Cathedral forfeits its knowledge and its skill when it ceases to touch the key-board. In man the central or substantive feature is the soul ; and of the life of the soul, this earthly life in the body is but a very small portion indeed. It is related to what follows, as is a brief preface to a very voluminous book : it throws light on what is to come ; it is relatively insignificant. "The things which are seen are temporal : the things which are not seen are eternal."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. iii. 19, 20.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 18.

And Easter is the season at which Christians should rekindle in themselves, and if it may be, through intercourse, in others, this sense of immortality. If man is not immortal, human life is a very poor thing indeed. But Christian life is more than a misfortune; it is a signal mistake. It was the rule of an excellent person now with Christ, before he left his room every morning to say this, among others prayers: "Grant, O Lord, that in all my works and words this day, I may never forget eternity." Let us also endeavour to cherish and extend the thoughts and resolutions which befit beings who must exist for ever. What are our prayers but the language of immortal spirits addressed to One Who has neither beginning nor end? What are our friends, our acquaintances, our enemies, if unhappily we have any, but beings, who like ourselves have before them an endless existence, and in whose destiny He Who has redeemed us by His Blood has an interest not less than in our own? What are our actions—be they, according to human standards, great or insignificant—but steps which our wills are taking, daily, hourly, in whatever direction, towards a future which ought to be for Christians the subject of all their best hopes? "The hope which is laid up for us in heaven"<sup>1</sup>—let us think well of it. Let us have the courage—I had almost said, the logic—of our faith. Let us remember that time is short, and that eternity is long.

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 5.

## SERMON II.

### THE EMPTY TOMB.

ST. JOHN XX. 13.

*And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.*

THE tears of St. Mary Magdalene before the empty sepulchre of Jesus Christ are at first sight out of keeping with the exulting joy of the Easter festival. Doubtless, as the wise man says, there is a time for everything.<sup>1</sup> By common consent, mirth is unseemly at a funeral, and mourning at a wedding. No good Christian would think of giving an entertainment on Good Friday ; and Easter Day, if it be anything, is a day of joy. It is the brightest, happiest day in the whole Christian year, for every sincere worshipper of Jesus Christ. This day reminds the Christian of the foundation fact which proves that his creed is true—the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This day proclaims that the future life, for which Christians live, is a solemn and certified reality, warranted by the Risen Life of their Lord and Saviour. Above all, this is the day of Christ's triumph over His enemies, over the enemies of man, over sin and death. As the Christian has sympathised with the mental and bodily sufferings of his Lord, so now he rejoices in his Lord's victory ; he rejoices because it is Jesus Christ Who triumphs. The song of Moses is also his song. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously."<sup>2</sup> On such a day as this, if ever, "the voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous ;" because "the Right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass : the Right hand of the Lord hath the pre-eminence : the Right hand of the Lord bringeth mighty things to pass."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. xv. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxviii. 15, 16.

Thus it is that on Easter Day the tears of Mary Magdalene are at first sight inappropriate—almost intrusive. They seem to traverse and check the free flow of joy which is the prerogative grace and privilege of the festival. They recall the sadness of the Passion, of the Burial; the bewildering uncertainties and keen anguish of Good Friday. And yet let us be sure that they do not appear here in the inspired accounts of the Resurrection, and in the Easter services of the Church, without good reason. Probably in our present state of existence it is impossible to surrender ourselves unreservedly to one mood of feeling. No earthly sorrow is unrelieved by some ray of brightness, no joy is without the shadow of some threatening or attendant grief. It might seem that we require the foil if we are to do justice to the positive feeling of the moment; just as a landscape which is relieved by the alternate play of light and shadow, is more welcome to our natural eyesight than that which lies under the uniformly splendid but oppressive glare of a southern sun.

Tears, they say, are wont to be unreasonable. They may be, sometimes. But Mary Magdalene knew quite well why she wept before the sepulchre. The angels "say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." There is reason in the tears of Mary: they show her strong and tender love. The most reasonable of all possible forms of love was the love which she had for the perfect moral Being, our Lord Jesus Christ. Her tears express her bitter disappointment. She had come to find Him, and He was gone. "They have taken away my Lord." Moreover they imply her longing for more knowledge about Him than she has as yet; they are the earnest of her perseverance. "I know not where they have laid Him." Let us take these points in order.

### I.

The affection of Mary Magdalene for Jesus Christ was not of yesterday. He had rescued her from sin and shame; He had cast out of her seven devils.<sup>1</sup> His love had not fallen, this time, upon an ungrateful heart. While He sat in the house of the Pharisee, who had forgotten the ordinary duties of Eastern hospitality, the poor penitent pressed into His Presence,

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xvi. 9.

that she might anoint His Feet with her choicest and her best, and wipe them with the hair on which in the days of her vanity she had most prided herself.<sup>1</sup> When He hung dying on Calvary, she was there, between the desolated mother and the beloved disciple; she had bent down in love and sorrow at the foot of the Cross.<sup>2</sup> And now early on the day of the Resurrection she is first at the sepulchre; "her eyes prevent the night-watches, that she may be occupied"<sup>3</sup> in her service of love; her hands are laden with spices and ointments, that she may do the last sad honours to Him Who still had the first place in her heart.

Let us remark, that according to the most probable explanation of the Evangelical narratives, Mary Magdalene arrived at the sepulchre, alone and first of all. As you would know, there is some difficulty at first sight in harmonising St. John's account of the first occurrences on Easter morning with that of the three other Evangelists. St. John, in to-day's Gospel,<sup>4</sup> describes Mary Magdalene as coming alone to the sepulchre, finding it empty, and then going to fetch St. Peter and himself. Whereas the other three Evangelists speak of a group of women, of whom Mary Magdalene was one—St. Matthew names two, St. Mark three,—as visiting the sepulchre, finding it empty, conversing with the angels who guarded it, and then going away to inform the disciples. Now the best way of accounting for this divergence, is to make what in the circumstances and with the persons concerned would be a very natural assumption. We may assume, without doing violence to the text of the Gospels, that this entire company of women, of whom Mary Magdalene was one, set out together from the city long before daybreak to visit the tomb of Jesus, which, as you will remember, was outside the walls; but that Mary Magdalene, under the impulse of her strong and tender love, gradually moved away from the rest, and hastened on before them. Just as an hour or two later, on that same morning, St. Peter and St. John ran together to the sepulchre, but "that other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre,"<sup>5</sup> so there is reason to think it had been with Mary Magdalene. Her more ardent love was impatient of the measured pace of others, who indeed loved Jesus well, but assuredly loved Him less than she. Thus in the Gospel narratives, taken together, we have two visits of women to the sepulchre before the scene

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke vii. 38.<sup>2</sup> St. John xix. 25.<sup>3</sup> Ps. cxix. 148.<sup>4</sup> Easter Day · St. John xx. 1.<sup>5</sup> St. John xx. 4.



described in the text; and also two embassies of women to disciples or Apostles; and two Appearances of Jesus to women in the early morning. First Mary Magdalene reaches the sepulchre, and finds the stone rolled away. She does not look within; she sees no angel; she returns to the city, by some other and shorter path than that along which her companions were advancing, to share her anxieties with St. Peter and St. John. Then the other women reach the sepulchre: they too find the stone rolled away; unlike Mary they enter the sepulchre, and are bidden by an angel to return to Jerusalem and inform Peter and the disciples that Christ had risen. Meanwhile Mary Magdalene is on her way back to the sepulchre to pay it a second visit; this time she is in company with St. Peter and St. John. These Apostles first examine all that met the eye, and then return to the city, leaving Mary alone before the empty grave. There she stands, as the lesson which has just been read describes her, weeping in the bitterness of her grief. This time she stoops down and looks in and sees the traces of the Body of Jesus; then she enters, almost without intending it, into conversation with the angel. Jesus is the one thought that fills her soul; and when she is asked, why she weeps, she answers, "Because they have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Mary Magdalene then, during the first hours of Easter Day, must not be merged in the company of devout women who visited the sepulchre of Jesus Christ. Her relation to the Resurrection is all her own; it is unique. She, the frail woman, the crushed broken-hearted penitent, makes the first visit to our Saviour's Tomb. To her He appears alive, before He appears either to Peter or to John. And the secret of this her high distinction among the first and greatest of the servants of Christ, is her love. "She loved much;"<sup>1</sup> this had been the reason for her full and free forgiveness. "She loved much;" this was the motive power which associates her, more than any other human being, with Christ's Resurrection glory. And in this surely there is reason. For what is rightly-regulated love but moral power of the highest order? As St. Paul puts it, "The love of Christ constraineth us."<sup>2</sup> Few men have ever explored the heights and depths of our human nature more thoroughly than did St. Augustine, and St. Augustine has a saying which shows how highly he valued the invigorat-

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke vii. 47.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 14.

ing and transforming power of love. "Only love," he said, "and then do what thou wilt."<sup>1</sup> Love is indeed the very muscle and fibre of moral force. If the condition of mankind is bettered, this is effected by those who love their fellowmen. If goodness is embodied in life and character, this is by those who begin by seeing, however imperfectly, the beauty of goodness. They are enamoured of it, before they try to make it their own. If truth is sought and found, amid and across difficulties which have seemed insuperable, this is not seldom by intellects to which truth has presented itself as an object in itself so beautiful as to win the love of their hearts. And if Mary rose in the dark night to visit the grave of her slain Master, and to pay Him such honours as her poverty could yield, this was because her soul was on fire with the moral power of a strong and pure affection, which was to be rewarded presently by the attainment of its object.

All this might well seem commonplace truth : but it requires to be reasserted from time to time, and not less in our own day than in past years. The moral power of love ; of love for goodness, of love for humankind, of love for right as against wrong, of love for truth as against error, is sometimes discredited among us, by being labelled with a new name. "Beware," men say, "of being led by emotion. Emotion is for women, for the unthinking, for the young ; it deserves no recognition in the life and conduct of a well-instructed thoughtful man ; since he should be swayed only and entirely by reason, or by what he conceives to be rational. He has as little to do with emotional motives as with the toys of his childhood or with the toilette of his wife."

Here observe, first of all, an assumption which is by no means warrantable, namely, that emotion is always another name for love. True, all love is emotion of a certain kind : but all emotions are by no means love. Emotion may be vulgar passion ; it may be violent hate ; ay, passion and hate, which, for the moment, pose in the garb of the most unimpassioned philosophy. And emotion is by no means always power. It may be the expenditure and forfeiture of power ; it may be as unfruitful as any speculation respecting the unknowable that ever haunted the brain of a pedant. But love is power. Love, the concentration of purified desire upon an infinitely noble object, does move and constrain all the resources and faculties of man ; love summons man to make the utmost

<sup>1</sup> "Dilige et quod vis fac."—*In Epp. Johann.*, Tr. vii. sect. 8.



of his manhood, whether by work or by endurance. And, therefore, love, so far from being the monopoly of women or children, is the very grace of the strongest and noblest manliness ; it kindles reason itself into activity ; it gives nerve and impulse to will. Woe to the man who is without love, without enthusiasm ; woe to him, above all, if he glories in his moral poverty ; if the glow in others of a strong love for goodness or for truth only provokes in him a smile or a sneer. Little as he may suspect it, his intellect, or common sense, when divorced from love, is a poor and awkward instrument, for all practical purposes. Little as he may suspect it, his manhood is enfeebled ; he has parted with the secret of its strength. He has done his utmost when he has raised a laugh at the cost of men who pursue what they believe to be good with steady enthusiasm. But, be he who he may, he will himself never achieve anything solid or great, for the good of his fellow-creatures, or for the glory of his God. It is love,—now as in the days of Mary Magdalene,—which conquers difficulty and outlives disappointment.

## II.

For Mary's words do breathe cruel disappointment. Mere curiosity would have been tranquil where Mary is in an agony : Mary is so bitterly disappointed because she loves. "They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid Him." It may be thought that Mary expected too much : that she hoped to find her Lord and Friend living and risen. But this is to reflect back upon her thoughts in that dark sad hour our own knowledge of the finished Resurrection. There is no reason for thinking that she believed more, hoped for more, saw further and deeper, than did the Apostles. At that time they expected to find Jesus in His grave ; and so did she. They must have then interpreted His saying about rising again the third day in a figurative sense ; and so must she. They then thought that in the great conflict with the Jewish people, He had finally succumbed : so did she. The past was beyond recall ; the past was failure—tragic, irretrievable failure ; so she thought. But in His dear Body, laid honourably and tenderly in the rich man's grave, there was an object, a centre-point for love. Nothing else was left. The voice, the manner, the living presence, the strong and tender words, the works of charity and of wonder ; all this was of the past. So she thought. It was gone irre-

vocably and for ever. But there was the mangled Form, lying out of sight, lying in the grave. This she would honour, this she would love and worship, upon this she would lavish her costliest and her best. She did not care to look forward. For the moment this was enough; it was her all. And then she came, early in the morning, and found Him gone. It was dreadful. She could bear the Way of Sorrows,—the Crucifixion,—the last hour—the last cry—better than this. For the moment it was the ruin of the little that was left to love. It was the sacrifice of her all. Thus it was that she stood without at the sepulchre, weeping. Thus it was that she answered the inquiry about her sorrow—"They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid Him."

But here it may be observed that if Mary only expected to find the Body, the cold dead Body of her Master, her passionate sorrow at missing It is unreasonable. For Mary, of course, did not know, what we who believe in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ do know,—that the Body of Jesus, as It lay in the tomb, as well as the Soul of Jesus, as It descended to the spirits of the dead,<sup>1</sup> were alike uninterruptedly united to His Divine Person, although Body and Soul were for the time separated by death. To her His Body was only that of a human friend, which must in time mingle with the parent earth. And thus it may be thought that Mary was spending her sorrow upon what was after all transient and accidental.

Ah! you who think thus know little of true affection. Certainly love seeks its object; but if its object be out of reach then it seeks anything which suggests that object. The picture of an absent child, the handwriting of a friend who has passed away, the bit of old furniture, the flower, the animal, the dress, the gait or habit, the recurrence of a season of the year which is entwined with a memory, the repetition of a phase or mood of nature, nay, the marked absence of something which has been customary, and which is therefore recalled by a subtle sense of contrast,—almost anything—is enough for love. The objects upon which it fixes are, to other states of feeling, matters of indifference, or matters of repulsion, or, at best, matters for wonderment. But to love they are everything. They feed and stimulate a glow of tenderness which resolutely transfigures them, and makes them what in other eyes than those of love they never could be. So

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. iii. 19.

it was with Mary Magdalene, weeping before the dawn of day, at the door of the sepulchre. We can imagine what comment her tears would have provoked from some well-to-do Scribe or Pharisee, learned in the law, holding a high place or a commission of some sort in the administration of public justice in Jerusalem. We can conceive the wondering, pitying scorn, too amused to be indignant, yet too annoyed to be thoroughly pleased, with which these traces of passionate attachment to the memory of a criminal condemned by the highest court in Jerusalem, would have been regarded. Why should a Jewish girl thus care to haunt the precincts of the dead, in the early hours of the morning, when as yet the world was not about? Why should she trouble herself, if the masonry had been disturbed, if the grave had been rifled, if the supreme disgrace of crucifixion had been followed by the more tolerable insult of disentanglement? Surely there were objects in the world, nearer her home, with greater claims upon her sympathies! Let her rid herself of this distorted mawkish sentimentalism as soon as may be. This is what would have been felt by such a personage as I am imagining; but what would it have mattered, did she know it, to Mary Magdalene? Love is, as a rule, supremely indifferent to criticism. It has ears and eyes for one object only; it moves straight forward to that on which its heart is fixed; it passes by all other objects—not with pride or disdain,—not even with effort: it heeds not their existence. Mary was at that very time gazing on an angelic form, so splendid and so unearthly, “that for fear of him” the soldier-keepers of the grave “did shake and became as dead men.”<sup>1</sup> To Mary, in that moment of supreme sorrow, this glorious angel was as nothing. All that she cared for, and hoped for, all her purest feeling, all her loftiest thought, had been buried some thirty-five hours ago in that rocky tomb along with the mangled Body Which they bore away in the evening from the hill of Calvary. Do not talk to her of misplaced sentiment, or of attachment to the trifling or the accidental. Do not try to measure the movements of a soul on fire by the stilted rules of your artificial society, which can create and understand anything better than an unselfish love. Let her cry on bitterly, as she stands there; for she heeds you not. Have the grace to let her cry a while, and then consider if her tears and her love have not that in them from which you may learn something.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 4.

## III.

Yes ! in Mary before the Holy Grave we find something beyond love and disappointment ; we find persevering resolution. "I know not where they have laid Him." She does not mean to sit down, there in the garden, and wring her hands, and beat her breast, and cease to inquire and to hope. No ; He must be somewhere ; perhaps she has a dim hope of the glorious reality, that He has not been taken away by human hands after all. Anyhow she will persevere : she will cross-question any one that she meets, whether it be an angel or a gardener, till she knows the truth. The disappointment does not overmaster her love : her love is still the motive power of her soul : she has her grief, so to say, well in hand, and does not mean to despair, because she has hitherto met with failure. When, afterwards, she supposed herself to be talking with a gardener, who had come at daybreak to set about his work, "Sir," she said, "if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."<sup>1</sup> Here there is no trace of despair ; here is perseverance, energy, resolution, readiness for any emergency, strong and patient expectation that, after all, something will happen to relieve her anxieties. It was said of English soldiers by a great foreign commander—half in eulogy, half querulously, when recalling his own experience,—that they did not know when they were beaten. And so Christian hope refuses to believe that it is ever beaten. It is imperturbably buoyant ; it makes the best of disaster ; it is sure that the darkest night will be followed by morning.

Brethren, it is to tempers of this kind that Jesus ever reveals Himself : it is the hopeful who in fact succeed. In Mary Magdalene that old promise was made good : "They that seek Me early shall find Me."<sup>2</sup> He Whom she sought was not in His grave ; not because human hands had rifled it, but because He was alive for evermore.<sup>3</sup> He Whom she sought was not lying before her eyes, cold and motionless ; because He was already close to her, bending over her, did she but know it, with a love for her greater far than was hers for Him. "She turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou ? whom seekest thou ? She, supposing Him to be the gardener, saith unto Him, Sir, if thou have borne Him

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 15.<sup>2</sup> Prov. viii. 17.<sup>3</sup> Rev. i. 18.

hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni ; which is to say, Master.”<sup>1</sup> She had recognised the voice, and it was enough. He Whom she had sought in the tomb was alive before her eyes ; and her joy was fulfilled.

## IV.

Mary Magdalene, weeping before the empty tomb of Jesus, reappears in each generation of Christians ; it is not hard, at least for some of us, to recognise her among ourselves. She is the type of those who have a genuine love of religion, but who from whatever cause, and in various ways, are for a time, at any rate, disappointed. And religious disappointment is difficult to bear, in proportion to the genuineness and sincerity of a man’s character : because it is felt that much is imperilled, while such disappointment lasts. For religion invites a larger stake—a bolder investment of thought and feeling and purpose than any other subject, corresponding to its transcendent importance. And when those who have given up all else that they may win this, think that they have missed what they hoped to have ; when those who like the merchant in the parable have sold their all to buy the pearl of great price, and suppose, though it be without reason, and only for a short while, that they have bought a flint after all ; the recoil of baffled hope is even terrible.

Take the not uncommon case of a person who has for some years, for whatever reason, paid scant attention to religious matters. He may not have broken God’s law in any very flagrant way : he may not have been exactly the Prodigal Son of the parable. He may only have been a very eager man of business ; or a very accomplished man of letters ; or a great favourite in society ; or a dreamer of unpractical but absorbing dreams. But he has lost sight of God. God has not merely had something less than His true place in the man’s thoughts, but scarcely any place at all. Still he remembers something of what he learned from his mother ; something of his early prayers ; something of his Bible ; something, it may be, of the glow and happiness of a Confirmation and a First Communion. And as he knows that the years are passing quickly, and that he must die, he trusts himself to the guidance of these memories

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 14-16.



of the past. He sets out—it is a painful and a creditable effort,—he sets out to visit the sepulchre of his early life as a Christian. There he trusts to find again the reality of religious faith ; there he seeks the Body of the Lord Jesus. He sets out with Mary Magdalene, that he may pay as of old his homage to the Person of his Lord ;—but like Mary, perchance, he finds that the mouth of the sepulchre is open, and the Body of Jesus gone. He remembers how he used to think about sacred subjects ; but somehow his old thoughts will not recur to him. He cannot recognise the accustomed haunts of his spirit ; the old phrases of thirty years ago are no longer to him what they were. There is something in the air which has changed the aspect of what was once for him so full of grace and life ; and he gazes on it as on the shell of an extinct creature, as on the ruined castle of a noble race. He opens his Bible : but alas ! it is interesting to him only as literature ; it is no more to him than Shakespeare or any other work of human genius : it does not speak to his immortal spirit : for him the Body of Jesus is not there. He tries to pray ; and prayer is to him only like poetry, an exercise which warms the soul, but which is not felt to be actual conversation with an Unseen Person : the Body of Jesus is not there. He will do his best ; he approaches the Holy Communion. But, here, again he finds only a symbolical ceremony which recalls the dead past ; there is no sense of contact with the Lord of Life : the Body of Jesus—so far as his experience goes,—of course he knows nothing of the Reality—the Body of Jesus is not there. Everywhere he sees traces of the old presence which haunts his memory. He counts the napkin, and the linen clothes ; he measures the chamber in which, as memory reports, his Lord had lain. But now there are voices that tell him how things have changed since those days of which he is thinking. They say that much which of old kept out light and air has been rolled away ; that many a scheme for setting a watch over the grave of some crucified Truth has been defeated ; that many a Truth, buried out of sight by the ignorance or the scorn of men, has risen to a new and glorious life ; and that all is not really lost, as it seems to him. He listens to these voices, perplexed, half incredulous, yet not altogether without hope ; but he still murmurs sadly that criticism, or controversy, or the spirit of the time, or religious movements of this kind or of that, have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre. And he knows not where they have laid Him.

Is it not possible that he is repeating the mistake, the very intelligible mistake, of Mary Magdalene? Is he not forgetting the meaning of the lapse of time? Mary assumed that she would find on Easter morning all that had been left, as it was left, on the late evening of Good Friday. She knew not that there are hours, in the life of souls, which may count for centuries; and that she had been living through such hours as these. She did not bethink herself that her Saviour might be preserved to her, not in the tomb where they laid Him, but under new conditions; in the freedom of the glorious Body, Which passed the sealed doors, and Which ascended to the heavens. Had Mary remained at the sepulchre, from the Burial onwards, watching—as did Rizpah the daughter of Aiah, in her tragic sorrow, before the corpses of her slain sons,<sup>1</sup>—had she sat continuously over against the sepulchre even throughout the second night after the Death of the Lord, she must have witnessed the Resurrection. She would have beheld the Body, re-animated with the Holy Soul of Jesus, flash forth from the tomb into the dark night. She would have seen the stone rolled away. As it was, she had been absent. She had lost the thread of continuity which linked the present to the past. She was perplexed. In time she found that her Lord was there, as before. But He was in the garden, not in the grave; a living Source of life, not a dead body to be covered with spices and ointments.

Nor need it be otherwise with such a ease as I am considering. Believe it, my friend, the old Truth is what it was. But time has done its work; and under the guidance of God's providence the minds of men have been active around and about it. A generation has passed since you were a boy; and a generation counts for much in a busy age like this. What wonder if some of those associations of a boyish mind have been disturbed; if some misapprehensions have been corrected; if some questionable prejudices have to be abandoned; if the relations which should exist between different fields of thought and knowledge have been made clearer—during the interval? What wonder if some of this activity has resulted in what looks like dislocation or destruction; or if it have at least caused intelligible perplexity? Depend on it, the Body of Jesus is not lost. Do not despair because you find It no longer amid the old conditions, the grave-clothes, the napkin, the sepulchre, of a bygone time. Distinguish between the Unchanging,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Sam. xxi. 10.

Indestructible Object of the religious life of the soul of man, and the ever-shifting moods of human thought and feeling that circle around Him, as the ages pass. Be patient, as Mary was patient, hopeful as Mary was hopeful ; and your share in Mary's tears will surely be followed by Mary's joy. You will recover for your Bible, for your prayers, for your Communions, all, or rather much more than, their old meaning. You will have exchanged Jesus in the tomb for Jesus in the garden ; the religious thoughts and resolves of a boy for the religious horizons and aspirations of a ripened manhood.

Perhaps on this, as on every Easter Day, there are certain characters who always need the lesson of the text. Easter, so full of joy, in earth and in heaven ; Easter, the queen of festivals ; Easter Day, the Day which the Lord hath made, that His Redeemed may rejoice and be glad in it, comes to them not without a shadow of disappointment. They have been looking forward to it, through Lent. They have been preparing for it, as Christians should, who would find in it a blessing. And now it is upon them. And if they are to say the truth, it is without that illumination from above, that sense of the Divine and the Eternal, on which they think they had a special right to reckon. They are standing with Mary Magdalene, but throughout the day, outside the sepulchre. They complain that the Lord has been taken away from them and laid they know not where.

True enough this may be, but—patience. Be earnest in seeking your Lord ; and you will find Him. If not on the festival itself, yet afterwards : if not in the public services of the Church, yet privately : if not in human words, yet in the sanctuary of your spirit's life : if not in warm and elevated feeling, yet in a sober and wholesome awe. Do not despair because for a moment the spiritual sepulchre seems to be empty. Rely on His love, on His goodness, on His interest in you personally, on His chartered kindness to those who seek Him. Mary was so bitterly disappointed because she loved. Yet it was her love which, in the end, forbade despair and conquered disappointment. And eighteen centuries have not emptied of its power that great promise of our Divine Lord—"If any man love Me, he will keep My words ; and My Father will love him ; and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 23.



## SERMON III.

### CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RESURRECTION.

1 COR. XV. 14.

*If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

LAST Sunday we were looking at the Resurrection from the garden of the sepulchre, and with the eyes of St. Mary Magdalene. The second lesson of the Morning Service of to-day carries us at a bound over a quarter of a century to listen to discussions about the Resurrection in one of the active centres of Greek life and thought. The text takes us to the Christian schools of Corinth, and St. Paul is pointing out to some ready but not very far-sighted disputants the consequences of their denying the Christian doctrine of the Resurrection of the dead. "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?"<sup>1</sup> To deny this doctrine in the block—so the Apostle argues—it to deny that Christ Himself has risen. If He has really risen from His grave, it is impossible to say absolutely that there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead, since here we have a representative instance of it.

There were, it seems, some at Corinth who did not shrink from encountering this argument by denying that even He, our Lord Jesus Christ, had really risen. To these persons the Apostle points out, that, however unconsciously, they are in point of fact giving up Christianity altogether. If Christ was still in His tomb, the errand of the Apostles to the world, and the obedience of the faithful to the doctrine which they preached, were equally based upon a vast illusion. "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain."

<sup>1</sup> 1 COR. XV. 12.

## I.

It is pretty certain that the persons with whom St. Paul is arguing this matter were not converts from Judaism to the faith of Jesus Christ. Whatever may be said of those Jewish freethinkers, the Sadducees ; a religious Jew, or a Pharisee, had no difficulty whatever in professing his belief that the dead would rise. He had always believed it. How strong and clear this Jewish faith was, in an age before the coming of our Divine Lord, we see from the account of the martyrdoms in the Book of Maccabees : those pious Jews died, under the hand of the persecutor, firmly believing that they would rise again.<sup>1</sup> And when St. Paul was arrested in Jerusalem and placed before the Sanhedrim, he knew how to strike a chord which would at once enlist the sympathies of the majority of his hearers : "Men and brethren," he cried, "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee : of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question."<sup>2</sup> The appeal was successful. "The scribes that were of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man : but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, to the pagan Greek the idea of a coming resurrection of the dead was not merely novel ; it was unwelcome. It was opposed to current Greek conceptions about the condition and destiny of the dead. To an ordinary Greek it would have seemed a materialistic way of stating the very shadowy possibilities of a future existence which alone presented themselves to his mind. So palpable and literal an assertion, that man would live once more an unmutated life, in his body as well as his spirit, would have repelled the Greek. For the immortality of the soul itself, although an original truth of natural religion, appears in Greek literature only as a fugitive speculation ; elegant and pathetic as its rendering at times undoubtedly is. Indeed the resurrection of man's body lay altogether beyond the frontier of customary Greek habits of thinking. When St. Paul began to preach the Resurrection at Athens, his hearers missed his true meaning so entirely, as to suppose that the word which expressed it was the name of a new deity. "He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods," they said, and this "because he preached unto them Jesus and the Resurrection."<sup>4</sup> And when these deeply-rooted

<sup>1</sup> 2 Mac. vii. 9, 11, 14, 23.<sup>2</sup> Acts xxiii. 6.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 9.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xvii. 18.

prejudices were carried by converts from Greek paganism into the Church of Christ, they contributed largely to form the systems of fantastic error which took definite forms in the second century after Christ, and are collectively described as Gnostic. Ten years after writing to the Corinthians St. Paul mentions to his pupil and legate, Timothy, two Greek teachers at Ephesus, Hymenæus and Philetus, "who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already."<sup>1</sup> These persons would seem to have wished on the one hand to keep to the language of the Apostolic Church, but on the other to get rid of its meaning and substance. They accepted a resurrection; but it was a past resurrection, not a resurrection in the future; a moral resurrection of the soul, not a literal resurrection of the body. This, you observe, was the Greek feeling, in secret rebellion against the faith, but not wishing to come to an open rupture, and so attempting an explanation, which might hold to the terms of a Christian profession, and at the same time reject the realities which those terms were meant to convey.

At Corinth we see the same feeling at work; but the Corinthians were recent converts, and they did not all of them know what a Revelation from God meant and involved. They thought that it was much like one of their own philosophies, something to be reviewed, discussed, partly accepted, partly rejected, at their pleasure. There was much in Christianity that they liked and accepted, without difficulty, nay, with enthusiasm. But "the resurrection of the dead" some of them at any rate could not tolerate. They asked, in contemptuous scorn, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"<sup>2</sup>—as if such questions had only to be raised in order to show all sensible people how absurd it was to expect an answer. Their difficulties about it arose out of their physical speculations, their theories about the universe, their ideas of the nature and destiny of beings. But they did not imagine that in denying the resurrection of the dead they were trifling with essential Christianity, or doing anything more or worse than rejecting a coarse dogma of Jewish origin.

This was the state of mind with which St. Paul is dealing in the text: and his first object is to oblige his readers to understand what their words really came to. In all matters to some extent, in religious matters especially, people use language without weighing its meaning; without asking

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 35.

themselves how much it involves and whither it will carry them. The Corinthians who denied "a resurrection of the dead" would like to have confined themselves to discussing a presumed physical impossibility of anything of the sort. St. Paul cuts them short by saying, 'If you mean what you say, you mean that Christ Himself never really rose.' If any of the Corinthians were prepared to accept this consequence, they probably did not see why they could not deny even the Resurrection of Christ, and yet somehow continue to be Christians. They did not wish in terms to give up Christianity. They may have flattered themselves that they still retained a firm hold upon all that was really essential in it; that they had only given up legendary additions to the simple story of the Life of Christ; additions which their Greek science had pronounced impossible. They were still willing to believe in a Christ Who displayed before the eyes of men a perfect example; Who did many works of wonder and of love; Who taught a heavenly doctrine; Who died a cruel and shameful death. But the assertion that, being dead and buried, "He rose again the third day, according to the scriptures," was, they thought, a superstitious, although an Apostolical, addition to the simple truth. It was no part of the fragment of Christianity which approved itself to their order of intelligence as being really fundamental; and they dismissed it as unimportant, if not untrue.

It is to these persons that St. Paul says solemnly, "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain." St. Paul will not allow that this faith in a Christ Who has not risen from His grave is any Christianity at all. According to him, if it is a religion at all, it is another religion; it has nothing really to do with the Faith preached by the Apostles. These Corinthians might still talk about our Lord Jesus Christ. They might still claim the honours and the risks of the Christian Name. They might even imagine that they only differed from the Apostles in being more clear-sighted and better informed, without being less tender-hearted and devout. But St. Paul will allow nothing of the kind. Do not let them deceive themselves in a matter of such momentous import. To deny or ignore Christ's Resurrection is to abandon Christianity. It is to give up the very core and heart of the Faith. The beliefs that remain may have an interest of their own; but it is the sort of interest which belongs to a corpse. It may remind us of the past. But it has no longer any place in the land of the living.

## II.

Why, it may be asked, should this be the case? Why cannot a man be a true Christian believer who rejects the Resurrection of Christ? How is it that the rejection of this truth can make the faith which still clings to much else, but denies this particular doctrine, vain or empty?

The answer is, Because the Resurrection of Christ is the foundation-fact on which the Christian creed rests, in a believing soul. If any one of the Apostles had been asked, how it was that they knew that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Eternal Son of God, the Saviour of the world, by Whose teaching and example men were to be enlightened; by Whose Blood men were to be redeemed; to Whom all the children of men were bound to pay the homage of their obedience and their love,—the answer would have been, Because the Lord Jesus rose from the dead. When you go home, read through their sermons as reported at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>1</sup> And observe how they base the claims of Jesus Christ upon the fact of His Resurrection, the fact to which they themselves bore a personal witness. In their eyes the Resurrection of Jesus was God's visible interference with the order of nature in order to certify the true mission and claims of Jesus. Our Lord Jesus Christ indeed had appealed beforehand to this very certificate: the sign which He had given to an unbelieving generation, in proof that He came from God, was that He would raise the temple of His Body from the dead in three days.<sup>2</sup> And therefore the Apostles began by preaching this fact of the Resurrection. They virtually said, 'He has been as good as His word; He has risen from the dead; therefore let us believe Him.' Thus, as St. Paul observed, "He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to His Holy and Higher Nature, by the Resurrection from the dead."<sup>3</sup>

But the Resurrection does not merely light up the past: it is an earnest of the future. It is the warrant that Christ will come to judge us. When St. Paul has told the Athenians that God has "appointed a day in which He will judge the

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 22-36; iii. 12-16; iv. 10-12, 33; v. 29-32; x. 34-43; xiii. 16-41.

<sup>2</sup> St. John ii. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 4: τοῦ ὀρισθέντος νιοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει, κατὰ Πνεῦμα ἁγιοσύνης, ἡς ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν.



world in righteousness by that Man Whom he Hath ordained," he naturally reflects that a critical and sceptical audience will ask what proof there is to allege in favour of so startling an announcement. Accordingly he adds, "Of this God has given assurance unto all men, in that He has raised Jesus from the dead."<sup>1</sup> The Apostles, when preaching the Faith, were like those architects who make a stone roof of wide area depend for its support on a central pillar. They know that the pillar is strong enough for its work. They were themselves appointed to be witnesses of the Resurrection; and they never met the world without bearing their testimony. They knew that if the Resurrection were sincerely believed all else in the Christian Creed would hold good. They knew also that if the Resurrection of Christ was rejected, nothing else could be, in the long-run, received at all.

Suppose for instance that one of these Corinthian rejecters of the Resurrection had said, 'I am not a man to believe in Christ's Resurrection, but I do not wish to reject the benefits of His Death.' The Apostle would have asked, 'What benefits do you mean?' What becomes of the Death of Christ if it was not followed by His Resurrection? It at once descends to the rank of a purely human event. It does not differ in character from the death of any other high-minded and disinterested man for a cause to which he is attached. It may still have—it undoubtedly still has—the importance of a great moral example; of devotion to truth, to charity, to justice. But the language which the Apostles use about it, and which Christendom has ever believed, becomes at once unmeaning. Why should the death of a mere man, whose body has mouldered in his grave, be a power in earth and heaven, mighty to cleanse from guilt, and to win for the sinner pardon from God? St. Paul's bones rest somewhere in or near the great city where they slew him, some thirty-five years after his Master's Death. But who could speak of Paul as dying for his followers, or for "the ungodly,"<sup>2</sup> or as "bearing their sins in his own body,"<sup>3</sup> or as being set forth as "a propitiation through faith in his blood"?<sup>4</sup> Who would dare to say that Christians are "reconciled to God by the death"<sup>5</sup> of St. Paul, or that, by him, they had "received the Atonement,"<sup>6</sup> or that Paul is a "propitiation for their sins, and not for theirs only, but also for the sins of the whole world,"<sup>7</sup> or that Paul "gave himself a ransom for

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 31.<sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 6.<sup>3</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 24.<sup>4</sup> Rom. iii. 25.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. v. 10.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 11.<sup>7</sup> 1 St. John ii. 2.

all"?<sup>1</sup> Every believer in Christ feels the shocking profanity of applying this language to any other than the Divine Redeemer. But why is it so profane? Because it is the Divine Person of Him, Who died on Calvary, Which gives such meaning to His Atoning Death. "Ye were not redeemed," exclaims St. Peter, "with corruptible things, as silver and gold," or indeed as the blood of a merely human victim, "but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and immaculate."<sup>2</sup> "If God," argues St. Paul, "spared not His Own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also"—it is the inevitable Christian inference,—"freely give us all things?"<sup>3</sup> But then how do we know that the Sufferer on Calvary was God's Own Son? The answer is, By the Resurrection. The Resurrection, if I may dare so to speak, put the death of Jesus Christ before the world in its true light. It was an immense reversal of *primâ facie* appearances. What had looked like a defeat was seen to be a triumph. What seemed the execution of a condemned criminal was recognised as an awful transaction, having immense results on earth and in heaven, throughout all time. If Christ "was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God."<sup>4</sup> This was the keynote of Apostolic teaching: the Resurrection had lifted His Death to a higher or rather altogether different level from that of any human sufferer. But then if the Resurrection is denied, all the Apostolic language about the Atonement becomes a tissue of mystical exaggerations, which as applied to the death of a mere man, are worse than unintelligible. This consequence the Corinthians might not have seen at once. But at any rate their faith in the Atonement was already undermined by their disbelief in the Resurrection of the Crucified Christ.

But suppose the Corinthians to say, 'Very well, we will give up the Atonement, but we will continue to believe in the beauty of Christ's language and example. This, after all, is in our opinion the essential thing in Christianity. The rest may go; and we shall not, perhaps, be the worse for losing it.'

Here St. Paul would have explained that in order to recognise the beauty of Christ's language and example there was no necessity for faith, properly so called, at all. Faith is the acceptance of the unseen upon sufficient testimony. It is a venture, warranted indeed, but not by experience. Its proper object is something which does not lie within the range of our

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 6.    <sup>2</sup> 1 St. Pet. i. 18, 19.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 32.    <sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

experience. You and I do not need faith, or anything but ordinary judgment and common moral sense, in order to do justice to the good sayings and good actions of any one of the many excellent people who may be named as having died some twenty or thirty years ago. We know enough about them, on very good evidence, to enable us to give full play to our admiration, and we admire them accordingly. It would be absurd to call them objects of faith.

Certainly St. Paul would have said, that faith, by which the soul takes possession of the Invisible, is not wanted for any such purpose as these Corinthians might have pleaded. But might he not, would he not, have gone a step further? Must he not have pointed out that to deny the Resurrection, and at the same time to profess to admire the Words of Christ, or the example of Christ, is really impossible? Did not our Lord more than once, when challenged for a sign or warrant of His claims, say that He would be put to death and rise again the third day?<sup>1</sup> Remark how He insists on "the third day;" there is a precision in the announcement which forbids figurative interpretation of this language, as if, forsooth, it could be satisfied by the remote triumph of His Name or doctrine, while His Body mouldered in the grave. No, it is impossible to admire some of His best-attested Words if His Resurrection be denied. Let me add, that it is impossible to admire His example. Upon what kind of ground can we explain or justify His inviting the love and trust and homage of all those pious souls who thronged around Him, if in reality He was not more than one of themselves; if He had not in Himself some sources and supplies of strength which were more than human? "We preach not ourselves,"<sup>2</sup> says His Apostle. But He, the Master, says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;"<sup>3</sup> "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden;"<sup>4</sup> "I am the Light of the world;"<sup>5</sup> "I am the True Vine;"<sup>6</sup> "I am the good Shepherd; all that ever came before Me are thieves and robbers."<sup>7</sup> The constant, reiterated self-assertion of Jesus Christ,—in the face of His Own precepts about the beauty of being humble, and self-forgetting, and retiring,—is to be explained by the inward necessity laid upon Him by His Divine Personality, of which His Resurrection was a visible witness to the world. Deny His Resurrection,

<sup>1</sup> St. John ii. 18, 19; St. Matt. xii. 38-40.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 5.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 6.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xi. 28.

<sup>5</sup> St. John viii. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xv. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. x. 11, 8.



and His character, as we have it in the Gospels, requires "reconstruction" if it is not to be met by the moral sense of man with a judgment very different indeed from that of sympathy and admiration.

### III.

These are some of the grounds on which St. Paul would have maintained that "if Christ be not risen, the faith of Christians is vain." But observe the character of his argument; it is an argument from the consequences of rejecting the Resurrection. Elsewhere he proves the Resurrection directly. It may be inferred from the Words of Jesus, from the language of prophecy, above all, from the actual experiences of actual eye-witnesses to be counted by hundreds, and many of whom were living when St. Paul wrote. Here St. Paul says, 'See what will happen, if you reject Christ's Resurrection. You will have to give up your Christianity altogether. If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain. You Corinthians are in a dilemma. You must go forward or you must go back. You must either believe with us Apostles, in the Resurrection of Christ, and in the resurrection of the dead which is its consequence, or you must fall back into the darkness from which you emerged at your conversion.'

This is a kind of argument which—if it were not being handled by an inspired Apostle—we should describe as trenchant. Plainly it is meant to cut discussion short, and to bring matters to an issue by a short and easy method. St. Paul feels that something must be said which will not be forgotten. He feels as when he told the Galatians—"If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing,"<sup>1</sup> or "If we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed,"<sup>2</sup> or the Corinthians, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha."<sup>3</sup> It was in this same state of mind, with this same general intention, that, namely, of rousing dull minds by some vivid statements to see how matters really stood, that he wrote, "If Christ be not raised, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain."

It may be urged that arguments of this kind are inconsiderate and unsuccessful. Do they not crush out, with their

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. i. 8.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

relentless logic, the still surviving faith of weak but inconsequent believers ; do they not forget Him Who would not quench the smoking flax, or bruise the broken reed ?<sup>1</sup> And secondly, do they always succeed ? Do they not rouse opposition, almost resentment, among persons of independence of character, who are not therefore hostile to religion ? May they not entirely defeat the object with which they are used : when of the alternatives presented the one is taken which was really designed to make the other inevitable ? The lever breaks in the workman's hand, just as it is being applied.

This, it must be granted, is true enough of the employment of such arguments in a great many cases among ourselves. No doubt there are writers and talkers who take pleasure in forcing people, as they say, to be consistent ; whatever may be the kind of consistency that is enforced. These writers and talkers are like a reckless man who rides at full tilt down a street full of children at play. They are thinking only of their own feat and prowess, nothing of the consequences. Often, indeed, as we must know, the employment of such intellectual weapons is very cruel : they leave wounds and doubts in tender minds which are healed only slowly or never at all. They may be very fine feats of reasoning. But like the sports of ancient kings, they are indulged at the cost of the defenceless and the weak. Too seldom indeed do many speakers and writers, in private and in public, track out the effect of their inconsiderateness in the shattered hopes, and the distressed consciences, and the weakened resolves, which are really due to it ! But, granting this, it does not by any means follow that arguments like that of St. Paul—‘ You must believe more than you do, or you will cease to be a Christian ’—are not sometimes necessary and charitable. They are like critical operations in surgery ; which no one would undertake or undergo without adequate necessity, but which are sometimes necessary to saving life.

Everything depends upon the spirit *in* which, upon the purpose *with* which, an argument like this is used. It may be used as a vain display of personal power, as a means of achieving intellectual victory. In this case nothing can well be more criminal. It may be used in a spirit of true charity ; in order to save a soul which has wandered into dreamland, and mistakes the pictured forms of its own fancy for the Eternal Truths. In this case nothing can be more charitable.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xii. 20.

The knife may be employed by a scientific surgeon to save a patient's life by a timely operation : or by a bungler, who is only thinking of his professional reputation : or by a burglar, to cut a man's throat. St. Paul, who watched with such tender solicitude over the weak brethren in Rome and at Corinth, would never have forced his hearers or readers to choose between the acceptance of one particular doctrine and the rejection of the Christian faith, unless under the pressure of a stern necessity. He had fully reckoned on the risks. He knew what the effect would be on those whom he addressed. He would never have placed them in the dilemma, unless he had been satisfied that they loved their faith better than their speculations ; and that they would accept the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ when they found that to reject it was to reject Christianity. A serious logical operation was needed. But the Apostle knew that the patient could bear it.

There are two practical considerations which present themselves.

First, reflect how dangerous it is to pick and choose in the things of God. It is not too much to say that some persons who would be distressed at the idea that they were bad Christians, have no idea at all of the truth that the Christian Revelation, if accepted at all, must be accepted as a whole. They speak and think as if, in approaching the truths which God has set before us through His Beloved Son, they were like intending purchasers entering a shop, perfectly at liberty to select whatever might strike their taste or fancy, and to reject the rest. The question of believing or rejecting belief, appears to them a matter to be decided by personal bias or inclination ; although of course in reality this is as unreasonable as it is irreverent. Unreasonable, because all really revealed truth rests on exactly the same grounds, and recommends itself equally to a perfectly balanced mind ; and irreverent, because, to reject any part of Revelation is virtually to tell the Divine Revealer that He has set before the mind of His creature that which is either unnecessary or incredible. At the same time, it is true that some truths may be rejected with less ruin to the entire fabric of faith than others : just as certain limbs of the human body may be amputated without destroying life, although they impair its perfectness, while others,—the head for example,—cannot be parted with, without instant death. Thus too, mistakes may be made about

the doctrines of grace, or the meaning of large portions of Scripture, without necessarily leading to fatal consequences. But to reject the Resurrection is to cut at the root of Christian belief; it is to cease, as far as thought and faith go, to be a Christian at all. A Christ who never rose from his grave is not the Christ of the Bible or of Christendom. Such a Christ has nothing in common with our living and adorable Saviour except the name.

Secondly, and lastly, ask yourselves, each one, What does the Resurrection of Christ mean to me? How much of my life, of my thought, of my resolve, is influenced by it? Put to yourselves the supposition,—for a Christian the impossible supposition,—that it was untrue. What would you have lost? Try to estimate the difference in your thoughts and lives, which the absence of this truth would involve. We know what the loss of a near relation would mean to us. We can calculate the effect, by thinking over our habits throughout the day. We know what the reduction of our income to such or such a sum would involve, in the loss of comforts, or in our means of doing good. What then would be the effect upon us of the withdrawal, if we could conceive it possible, of the doctrine of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Creed and from the Bible? How would it affect our hold of other Christian truths? How would it change our thoughts about the future; about the world unseen, about death, about all that is to follow after death? How would it touch our thoughts and feelings throughout each day, as they move around the Person of an Unseen but Present Lord and Saviour? If we get this question honestly answered, we may form a tolerably fair estimate of the value of our faith in Christ's Resurrection at this moment. If we do indeed believe that He is risen, that stupendous faith does and must mould thought, feeling, resolve, in very various ways. If we do believe that He is risen and living, then we know, that to part with this faith would affect the life of our spirits, just as the extinction of the sun's light and warmth in the heavens would affect all beings that live and grow on this earth. If Jesus Risen is indeed the Object of our faith, then our religion is not merely the critical study of an ancient literature, but a vitally distinct thing; it is the communion of our spirits with a living and Divine Being. It is faith in the Resurrection which marks our present relations to Jesus Christ as altogether different

from those which we have to the famous dead who have in past years filled the thoughts and governed the history of mankind. At the beginning of this century,—as it is natural to reflect within these walls,—Nelson and Wellington were names second to none among the men who claimed the attention of the world. Where are they now? Their ashes moulder beneath our feet. Where are they now? Their disembodied spirits are waiting, we know not exactly where, for the hour of the Judgment. But where is Jesus Christ? He, risen from His grave, arrayed in His Glorified Manhood, is seated on the throne of heaven; He is the meeting-point and centre of the vast empire of living souls; He is in communication, constant and intimate, with millions of beings, to Whom, by His Death and His triumph over death, by His persistent and exhaustless Life, He is made Wisdom and Righteousness and Sanctification and Redemption.<sup>1</sup> Yes! To believe in the Risen Jesus is to live under a sky which is ever bright. It is to believe that He is “alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 18.

## SERMON IV.

### CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RESURRECTION.

I COR. XV. 14.

*If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.*

THIS is St. Paul's way of saying, as strongly as he can, that there is no doubt whatever about the fact of our Lord's Resurrection from the dead. He tells his readers that Christ is risen, because if He is not risen consequences must follow which he knows they will treat as plainly absurd. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain." Certain members of the Corinthian Church, converts, we cannot doubt, from Greek heathenism, had brought with them into the Church of Christ some of the habits of thought as to the evil nature of matter, which they had learnt from the Greek philosophers. This led them to regard such a doctrine as that of the resurrection of the dead as too gross and material a conception for a spiritual religion like Christianity; and they thought that Christianity would do better without it. Accordingly they said, in so many words, that there was no resurrection of the dead.

Many people are always to be met with who commit themselves, especially on religious subjects, to general and sweeping statements without thinking out what these statements mean, what they lead to, or what they take for granted. St. Paul will not allow such a very serious matter as the Resurrection to be dealt with after this fashion. He says in effect to the Corinthians: 'Measure your words. You say that there is no resurrection from the dead. Very well, if this is the case, Christ our Lord Himself did not rise from the dead. If you mean your general assertion, it



commits you in this particular instance. It forces you to this dreadful and appalling conclusion. You must deny the Resurrection of Christ. And to do that,' he proceeds, 'is in fact to deny the truth of Christianity. For if Christ never rose from His grave, the teaching of the Apostles was mere rhetoric, to which nothing corresponded in the world of fact. If Christ never rose from His grave, you yourselves, Corinthian Christians, who still call yourselves believers, yet hold a faith which has no ground to rest upon. Its very heart has been taken out of it. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain."'

There is no reason to suppose that the Corinthian Christians who are in question denied in terms that Christ rose from the dead. They were thinking chiefly of the general resurrection at the last day, as taught by the Apostolic Church; and they held generally that there was no resurrection. They may not have thought of the bearing of this general opinion on the Resurrection of Christ. But St. Paul is determined that they shall think of it. He wishes to oblige them to give up their error about the general resurrection by reducing the principle of this error to a profane absurdity, which, once presented to a Christian believer, would be indignantly set aside. "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, your faith is also vain."<sup>1</sup>

## I.

"If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain." *Our* preaching! St. Paul associates himself with the older Apostles who had seen the Lord Jesus on earth, and especially after His Resurrection. He and they had alike been preaching a message to the world, which, if Christ had not really risen from His grave, was vain. It was "empty;" a mere assortment of words and phrases, without substance or soul. It was a doctrine, if it could still be called a doctrine, devoid of all that entitled it to command the attention of human beings. Now the Corinthians who denied the general resurrection had no intention of casting any slur upon the teaching of the Apostles, much less of bringing it to such utter discredit. They probably, as did other Greeks, thought themselves able to criticise it freely, and in some respects even to improve upon it. As yet

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14.

they did not understand that a Revelation, if accepted as such, must be accepted as a whole, as coming from the Author of all truth; and as being, from the nature of the case, beyond the reach of human judgments. But, whatever their inconsistencies, they had no idea that they were, by implication proclaiming to the world that the teaching of the Apostles was in reality an unsubstantial dream.

It was St. Paul's duty to undeceive them: As their denial of any resurrection involved that of the Resurrection of Christ, so the denial of Christ's Resurrection was fatal to the claim of the Apostles to be serious teachers of Religion. For if there was any one truth upon which the Apostles had staked their credit, as messengers of God, it was the truth that Christ had risen from the dead. His Resurrection was the instrument by which they forced their way to popular attention. His Resurrection was the proof of the truth of what they had to say. His Resurrection was the most important part of what they had to say. Two months had not passed since it occurred when they first began to preach it, and with the confidence of men who knew that they would not be contradicted, and that their assertion had everything to gain by inquiry. The first, it might also have seemed the only, duty of an Apostle was to proclaim the Resurrection. When St. Matthias was chosen into the vacant chair of Judas, St. Peter thus defined an Apostle's work—"a man ordained to be a witness with us of" Christ's "Resurrection."<sup>1</sup>

Now observe how the reported preaching of each of the great Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul corresponds with this. What was the first sermon ever preached in the Church of Christ, by St. Peter, surrounded by the eleven Apostles, on the Day of Pentecost? Its point is to show that the Resurrection, to which he and his brother Apostles could bear witness, had been prophesied by David in Psalm xvi.<sup>2</sup> Again, how does he explain the miracle of healing the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, in the two addresses which he delivered, first to the assembled spectators, and next after his arrest before the Sanhedrin? In both he refers the miracle to the power of Jesus Christ; living because risen, and risen, although crucified and dead.<sup>3</sup> The Resurrection of Jesus is the clue to the mystery which so oppressed the imagination of the Jews and their rulers, that poor unlettered men should be working such miracles and winning such influence. Again,

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ii. 22-36.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. iii. 12-16; iv. 8-12.



when numerous conversions had taken place, and the Apostles were a second time arrested and charged with having filled Jerusalem with their doctrine, what is St. Peter's apology? He says that, in fact, the Apostles cannot help it; the Resurrection is a fact which lays a necessity upon them. "Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, Whom ye slew."<sup>1</sup> Once more, when St. Peter is instructing the heathen soldier Cornelius and other inquirers, in the grounds of Christian doctrine, at Cæsarea, what is his main argument? "The Jews," he says, "slew Jesus, and hanged Him on a tree; Him God raised up the third day, and showed Him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with Him after He rose from the dead."<sup>2</sup> Nor is it otherwise in the reported sermons of St. Paul. St. Paul had not seen the Risen Jesus before the Ascension. But he knew what other Apostles had seen. And he himself had had sensible proofs that Jesus was alive. Consider then the great discourse which he pronounced in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia.<sup>3</sup> Everything in it leads up to Christ's Resurrection. Christ was slain by the pressure put upon Pilate by the Jews; Christ was raised by God the Father from the dead, and seen many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem. And then this is shown to agree with prophecy, as the Jews understood it, in the Psalter and in Jeremiah. Or read the speech which he made on the Areopagus at Athens.<sup>4</sup> All God's previous dealings with mankind, so he contends, had led up to the Apostolic preaching of repentance. And repentance was necessary because judgment was coming; and the Judge was to be a Man ordained by God: "whereof," he adds, "God hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Or read his speech at Cæsarea before Agrippa.<sup>5</sup> He defends himself against his Jewish accusers by saying that he taught "none other things than those which the Prophets and Moses had foretold; namely, that the Christ should suffer, and that He should be the first that should rise from the dead."<sup>6</sup> That is St. Paul's own account, when put upon his defence, of his general teaching.

In fact, it is impossible to read the reports of the early teaching of the Apostles without seeing that their teaching centred

<sup>1</sup> Acts v. 29, 30.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. x. 39-41.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xiii. 16-41.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xvii. 22-31.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xxvi. 2-23.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 22, 23.

in, and rested on, the Resurrection. The Resurrection was their reason for teaching at all ; it was also the main substance of what they taught. If they were deceived as to its reality, their teaching had neither basis nor substance ; their exhortations, their apologies, their appeals, their entreaties, their interpretations of prophecy, their account of the facts before them, their anticipations as to the future, all become forthwith a confused and irrational array of phrases ; and the world might well regret that such teaching had not already died away upon the breeze and been forgotten. Nay, St. Paul uses sterner language. If Christ be not raised, “we are found false witnesses of God ; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ.”<sup>1</sup> Full well might he exclaim—“If Christ be not risen, . . . our preaching is vain.”

## II.

But St. Paul adds, “If Christ be not risen ;—your faith is also vain.” He supposes some Corinthian to say : ‘After all, the Resurrection of Christ is only one article of the Christian faith : if we give it up, we can still believe the rest. The Apostles may be discredited by promulgating the Resurrection ; but much of the Apostolic teaching will survive their discomfiture. Christ may never have risen ; yet portions of the faith which bears His Name may well have other grounds to rest on, and may still be the strength and solace of human souls.’

This is what a Corinthian might have said. But St. Paul will not allow it. He maintains that as it is with the preaching of Apostles, so it is with the faith of Christians. Both are alike vain, if Christ never rose from the dead.

Let us try in some degree to follow him, if we can. And, with a view to this, let us ask ourselves what are the leading features of the state of mind which Christian faith creates in the soul, and how these are likely to be affected by the denial of Christ’s Resurrection from the dead.

I. The most characteristic trait in the habitual thoughts of a believing Christian is the conviction, never absent from his consciousness altogether, often present with an urgent and constraining power, that, although most unworthy, he is a redeemed man ; that by the perfect Obedience, the atoning Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, and the graces and gifts which flow

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 15.

from it, he has been bought out of bondage to sin and death, and placed in a new relation towards God ; a relation of freedom and of sonship, begun in this world and to be perfected hereafter.

This consciousness of Redemption, this buoyant, thankful, exulting sense of living beneath the smile of the Author of his existence, through the reconciliation which has been so generously effected by Christ, enters into all the recesses of the Christian's soul. It regulates thought, it inspires prayer, it impels to action. It determines the course of feeling towards and intercourse with others, it leaves no district of mental or moral action altogether unaffected by its pervading influence. St. Paul's words, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me,"<sup>1</sup> are emblazoned everywhere within the chambers of the soul. They reappear in each district of thought and feeling ; and all the soul's faculties conspire to sing the hymn of the redeemed, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."<sup>2</sup>

But, if Christ has not risen from His grave after all, where is the justification of all this ? Is it not all an illusion ? How can a fellow-mortal, as little the final conqueror of sin and death as any one of us, be the author of a new life ? How could a Christ who was laid in his grave to see corruption and to mingle his body with the dust, be the Redeemer of Christendom ? Pay such a Christ what compliments you will on the score of this or that portion of his teaching of which you happen to approve, or of such and such a trait in his character which wins your admiration. These eulogies do not make him the Lord of life and death, nor do they invest his death with atoning power. Why was it that in dying Jesus wrought out such vast and unimaginable blessings for our fallen race ? Because His Person gave to His Death an infinite value : because each pang of His Soul, each drop of His Blood, was charged with all the virtue of His Godhead. But "in the sight of our eyes He seemed to die, and His departure was taken for misery."<sup>3</sup> How were men to know that an event so exceptional had taken place ; that a superhuman Person had been crucified ? The Apostle replies that He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, in respect of His Holy and Higher Nature, by the Resurrection from the dead."<sup>4</sup> The Resurrection pours a flood of light upon the Passion. The

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 20.<sup>2</sup> Rev. v. 12.<sup>3</sup> Wisdom iii. 2.<sup>4</sup> Rom. i. 4.

Resurrection shows what it was that made Calvary the scene not merely of a public execution, but of a world-redeeming Sacrifice. And if Christ be not risen, then there is no proof that He Who suffered on Calvary was more than the feeble victim of an enormous wrong ; powerless, as His enemies said, to save Himself, and much more powerless to achieve the salvation of others. To quote St. Paul once more : " If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain ; ye are yet in your sins."<sup>1</sup>

2. A second ruling feature of a Christian's habitual state of mind is that he is constantly looking forward to another life. A Christian does not speculate on another life as a possibility ; he takes it for granted as an ascertained fact. He looks forward to it, as he looks forward to the changes of nature, to the setting of the sun, to the succession of the seasons. He knows that death will come to him as to everybody else ; that each day of his life brings it nearer ; that it means a momentous, and an unimaginable change. But he knows something too of what will follow it. Christ our Lord has converted what was, before He came, at best a splendid guess, into an absolute certainty. He has explored that unknown world. If He has unveiled its terrors He has enhanced its beauties. He has told all who will trust Him as a Guide, how to secure in it a blessed Immortality. And therefore, as I have said, a Christian looks forward. He treats this life as a preface to that which will follow it. He gives it up, if need be, to secure the life beyond. He does not pretend to be particularly heroic, or other than a prudent man who acts upon the knowledge which has been put in his way. But he looks forward to the time when " mortality will be swallowed up of life,"<sup>2</sup> and meanwhile he " rejoices in the hope of the glory of God."<sup>3</sup>

Suppose, however, that Christ has not really risen from His grave, what then becomes of these bright anticipations ? Is there any real warrant for them ? There remain, you say, the Words of Christ. Granted. But what is their authority ? If Christ never rose from His grave, how do His Words about the future life of man differ from the words of Plato ? They are more positive, no doubt. But do they represent any sources of knowledge altogether distinct in kind from those which Plato had at command ? No ; if Christ died, and did not burst the fetters of death ; if His dust in very deed still mingles with the soil of Palestine ; then it is trifling with language and with

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 17.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 4.<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 2.

the hopes and anxieties of the soul of man to tell us that He has "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel,"<sup>1</sup> or that He has "opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers." If He be indeed not risen, He has only added a few more positive assertions on the subject of immortality to the stock of speculations which mankind already possessed. But we do not really know more about immortality than we did before He came. Unless Christ have risen from His grave, your faith, Christian brethren, in a future life, so far as it is based on His additions to our natural anticipations, is undoubtedly vain.

3. A third feature of the state of mind created in the soul by Christian faith is belief in the possible perfection of man. It is difficult to exaggerate the value of this particular conviction. Our average experience of human character, in ourselves if not in others, is so disheartening, that a strong faith in man's capacity for perfection is a necessary ingredient of all earnest moral effort. And this is afforded us by our Lord Jesus Christ. Whatever must be said of mankind in general; whatever abatements must be made from the character even of those who have lived lives the highest and the nearest to God,—One Life, we Christians know, there has been, which has been unstained by any taint of sin; One absolutely true and unclouded Intellect; One Heart whose affections were perfectly pure; One Will of which the rectitude and the vigour was never for an instant impaired. He could challenge a jealous world to convict Him of sin, if it could, He could dare to say of His actions, "I do always such things as please the Father."<sup>2</sup> In the judgment of those who watched Him most closely, He "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."<sup>3</sup> And indeed "such an High Priest became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners."<sup>4</sup> We needed Him as our Priestly Representative in heaven. We needed Him no less as our Standard of true human Excellence on earth.

But if Christ be not risen, is He still a perfect character? If the event to which He solemnly referred as the ratification of His mission never occurred at all, can He be acquitted, I will not say, of levity, but of trifling with the confidence and hopes of His followers? What would be said of a modern teacher or leader who had encouraged men to give up all their

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> St. John viii. 29.

<sup>3</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. vii. 26.



prospects in life upon the strength of promises which were never realised, and which he must have known never could be realised ; and who had done this with so much solemnity and detail, as to preclude any possibility of their misapprehending him ? We should use severe language in describing his offence. If he could be acquitted of an intention to deceive, it would only be by admitting that he was himself the victim of a delusion, so serious, as to disqualify him altogether for undertaking the guidance of others. No, my Christian friends, if Christ be not risen, it may be possible to save something out of the wreck of His character ;—we will not discuss further what must be for a Christian so intolerable a discussion. But your faith in His perfection must perish irretrievably. It is also vain.

4. A last characteristic of the state of mind produced by Christian faith is confidence in the ultimate victory of good over evil. Here again is a truth, over which much in the world at large, and in the lives of single men, may well cast a shadow. “The righteous perisheth and no man layeth it to heart :”<sup>1</sup> the “ungodly are in no peril of death, but are lusty and strong ; they come in no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men.”<sup>2</sup> This is the appearance which human life wears from age to age. Here and there, we see notorious exceptions to the rule. But upon the whole evil seems to be in possession, and, as far as experience goes, it is likely to hold its own. When a Christian is haunted by this impression, which strikes at persistent faith in the moral supremacy of God, he turns his thoughts to the Resurrection. Never did evil obtain such a triumph over pure goodness as when it nailed Jesus Christ our Lord to the Cross of shame. Never was the ultimate victory of goodness so clearly vindicated as on the morning of the Resurrection. Of this supreme event, Joseph’s exaltation to be the ruler of Egypt, David’s triumph over Saul, Israel’s deliverance, in one age, from the Egyptian bondage, in another from that of Babylon, were but faint adumbrations. The greatest proof that ever was given that the world is governed by a moral God, was given when Jesus, the sinless Victim of triumphant evil, was rescued by the Resurrection from the clutches of death.

But if Christ be not raised ; what then ? Then it must be admitted that the greatest of all injustices on record has never

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lvii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 4, 5.

yet been redressed, and that God has given us no visible pledge that it ever will be redressed. Then it must be owned that the claims of evil and darkness to rule the world are not really shaken by a dead Christ; that all which Christianity,—so to call the tenets of any who, while denying a Risen Saviour, yet care for the name—all that Christianity has to offer is fair words, precarious hopes, but no new facts whatever, to enable the sinking heart of man to maintain its struggle with predominant evil. If Christ be not risen, your faith in the ultimate victory of good, so far as it rests on what He experienced, is only too surely vain.

### III.

It has been a matter of complaint against St. Paul, and against others who have followed him, that recourse should be had to arguments of this kind; arguments which are said to kill or cure, and to cure less frequently than they kill; arguments which show more care for logical consistency than for our Lord's example, Who would not "break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax."<sup>1</sup> For the Corinthians, it is said, might have replied to St. Paul's challenge, by accepting the consequences with which he hoped to frighten them. They might have said to him: 'Very well; if we have to choose between abandoning our objection to the resurrection of the dead generally and the denial of Christ's Resurrection, we will deny Christ's Resurrection. And if you tell us that this means the rejection of Christianity, to all intents and purposes; we shall not shrink from rejecting it.'

Had this been the state of mind of the Corinthians, St. Paul, we may be sure, would have dealt with them differently. He knows his ground, as is plain from other passages in this very Epistle;<sup>2</sup> he sees clearly the malady with which he has to deal, and he chooses his instruments accordingly. The Corinthians are inconsequent. They do not see what results from their premises. But they are inconsequent believers; they are not inconsequent sceptics. Their creed is mutilated and erroneous; but they do not wish to be in error. They may err, as the saying goes, but they have no mind to be heretics. Devotion is not always logical, and so far as they go, they are, in intention, devout. Their hearts are in the right place. And therefore the Apostle, anxious to do the best

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.

he can for them, subjects them to the strain and pressure of this trenchant argument. For he knows that they can bear it. He knows that they will end, not by proclaiming the vanity of Apostolic preaching and of Christian faith, but by confessing the Resurrection as he himself believes it. If he were living among us now, and read all that is written by some who profess the faith for which he worked and died, is it impossible that he might think some argument of the same kind not less necessary than it was in Corinth?

St. Paul, I have said, could wield this bold argument because he knew who they were to whom it was addressed. But he knows more than this; he knows that, in affirming that Jesus has risen, he has behind, beneath him, solid, irreversible fact. No dim suspicion haunts his soul that this faith in a Risen Saviour for Whom he would gladly die, rests, in the last analysis, on the dreams of an hallucinated woman, or on some cunningly-devised fable, the product of a bitter disappointment, or on some fond popular anticipation, which hope, in a mood more eager than discerning, has twisted into the semblance of history. St. Paul knows that while he writes there are still more than two hundred and fifty persons living who saw Jesus Christ Risen on one occasion;<sup>1</sup> he knows that Apostles saw Him,<sup>2</sup> one and another; that they ate with Him,<sup>3</sup> that they conversed with Him,<sup>4</sup> that they were blessed by Him again and again.<sup>5</sup> "Now," he exclaims exultingly, "is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept."<sup>6</sup> We must not follow him to-day any further into the grounds on which this vital conviction rests. It is enough to have seen what he thinks about the consequences of rejecting it.

But it is because Christ's Resurrection from the grave is at once so vital and so certain, that on this great Festival the Church throughout the world abandons herself to such ecstatic transports of joy and praise. This, and nothing less, is the meaning of her Alleluias; she knows the foundation of the faith of Christians to be a reality. At the empty tomb of Jesus, faith plants her foot firmly on the soil of earth, and then

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 16, 17; St. Mark xvi. 1, 14; St. Luke xxiv. 31, 36; St. John xx. 21, 26-29; 1 Cor. xv. 7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 30, 43; St. John xxi. 12, 13; Acts x. 41.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10, 18-20; St. Mark xvi. 14-18; St. Luke xxiv. 17-51; St. John xx. 19-23, 26-29; xxi. 1-22; Acts i. 3-8; ix. 5, 6.

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 36, 50; St. John xx. 19, 21, 26.

<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 20.



presently she raises her head to the heights of heaven. If Christ have indeed risen, then the Redemption on Calvary, then the life beyond the grave, then the unassailable sanctity of the Perfect Man, then the coming triumph of goodness over evil, are certain and indisputable. If Christ be risen indeed, then neither is the Apostolic teaching vain, nor is the faith of Christians vain. "The Lord is risen indeed." And therefore, to the end of time the Apostolic message will sway successive generations of men with a conviction of its truth and power; and the faith of Christendom will be, as it has been, the strength and the consolation of millions, as they pass through this world into the life beyond the grave.

## SERMON V.

### FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH IN THE RESURRECTION.

I ST. JOHN v. 6.

*It is the Spirit That beareth witness.*

ON Easter Day we were considering St. Paul's argument, that without faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ serious Christianity is impossible; that, when the Resurrection is denied, Apostolic doctrine and Christian faith are alike emptied of all vital force. A Christ who died, and who never rose from death, is not the Christ of the New Testament, or the Christ of Christendom. Such a Christ as this never would have converted the world, and a Christianity, so to call it, which centres in such a Christ, will not long even interest it. A Christ who died, but who never has conquered death, is plainly an intellectual makeshift; the creation and the toy of souls, who are passing, whether consciously or not, from the faith of their fathers to infidelity. If it can be shown that Christ did not really rise from His grave, Christianity sinks at once to the level of a purely human theory of life and conduct, whose author failed altogether to make good his language about himself. Certainly Christ's religion has played too great a part in human affairs to be forgotten by history; but it would, in the event contemplated, have forfeited all right to obtrude itself any longer on the attention of mankind, as God's great revelation of Himself to His rational creatures.

It is natural to ask a question, the answer to which was only glanced at last Sunday,<sup>1</sup> namely, What is the evidence that Christ did really rise from the dead? And here, as St. John says in to-day's Epistle, "it is the Spirit That beareth witness."<sup>2</sup> St. John, indeed, is speaking immediately of that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sermon iv.

<sup>2</sup> I St. John. v. 6.

faith in our Lord's Eternal Sonship which overcomes the world. But since the Resurrection is the main proof of our Lord's Divinity ; since He "was declared to be the Son of God with power, as regards His Holy Higher Nature, by the resurrection from the dead ;"<sup>1</sup> it follows that the Spirit must also bear witness to the Resurrection. And He does this in two ways. It is His work, that those historical proofs of the Resurrection which have come down to us, and which address themselves to our natural reasoning faculties, have been marshalled, recognised, preserved, transmitted in the Church of Christ. The Spirit, as we Christians believe, bears witness in the sacred pages of the New Testament to the Resurrection of Jesus. But He bears another witness, as we shall presently see, by His action, not so much on the intelligence, as on the will of the believing Christian. Let us ask ourselves, first of all. What is the evidence with which we are supplied on the subject of the Resurrection ? what is there to be said on the subject to a person who believed, I will not now say, in the supernatural inspiration, but in the general trustworthiness of the writings of the first Christians ?

## I.

In order to know that our Lord did really rise from the dead, we have to satisfy ourselves that three distinct questions can be answered.

Of these, the first is whether Jesus Christ did really die upon the Cross. For if He merely fainted or swooned away, then there was no resurrection from death. Then He merely recovered consciousness, after whatever interval. But each one of the four Evangelists says expressly that He did die. The wonder is not that He died when He did, after hanging for three hours in agony, but that, after all His sufferings at the hands of the soldiers and the populace, before His crucifixion, He should have lived so long. Yet suppose that what looked like death on the Cross was only a fainting-fit. Would He have survived the wound in His side, inflicted by the soldier's lance, through which the blood yet remaining in His heart and the water of the pericardium escaped ? We are expressly told that the soldiers did not break His legs, because He was already dead :<sup>2</sup> and before Pilate would allow the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 4.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xix. 33.

Body to be taken down from the Cross he ascertained from the centurion in command that death had already taken place.<sup>1</sup> But suppose, against all this evidence, that when Jesus was taken down from the Cross, He was still living. Then He must have been suffocated by Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus when they embalmed Him. They rubbed one hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes over the surface of His Body; and then they wound linen bandages round each of His limbs, His Head and His Body, before they laid Him in the grave. The Jews carefully inspected and sealed His tomb: they had sentinels placed there; and were satisfied that the work was thoroughly done. To do them justice, the Jews have never denied the reality of our Lord's death; it is impossible to do so, without paradox.

A second question is whether the disciples did not take our Lord's dead Body out of His sepulchre.

They would not have wished to do it. Why should they? What would have been their motive? Put yourselves in the position of the disciples, when convinced of the reality of our Lord's death. They either believed that He would rise from the dead, or they did not. If they did believe it, they would have shrunk from disturbing His grave, as from an act not less unnecessary than profane. If they did not believe in it, and instead of abandoning themselves to unreflecting grief, allowed themselves to think steadily, what must have been their estimate of their dead Master? They must now have thought of Him as of one Who had deceived them, or Who was Himself deceived. If He was not a clever impostor who had failed, He was a sincere but feeble character, Who had been the victim of a religious delusion. On either supposition, why should they rouse the anger of the Jews, and incur the danger of swift and heavy punishment? What would have been gained, for good and simple men, by persuading the Jews that He had risen, or that He was the Messiah, or that His anticipations had come to pass, if, all the while, they themselves knew that He was dead, and that His dead body had only been shifted by themselves from one resting-place to another? If they were mere religious adventurers, they could not have hoped to succeed: the trick would have been not less fruitless than absurd. The world, after all, is not converted by sleight-of-hand. And in order to believe that the Apostles would not

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xv. 44, 45.

have wished to remove our Lord's Body from the sepulchre, it is only necessary to credit them with ordinary common sense.

But had they desired, they surely would not have dared it. Until Pentecost, they were, by their own account, very timid men. When Jesus was arrested, all the disciples forsook Him and fled.<sup>1</sup> St. Peter denied Him.<sup>2</sup> Only St. John ventured to follow Him to Calvary, and to stand near His Cross.<sup>3</sup> For some days afterwards the disciples did not presume to show themselves in public, for fear of the Jews.<sup>4</sup> When our Lord stood in the midst of the closed chamber, they took Him for a phantom, and were seized with terror.<sup>5</sup> Were these the men to risk a desperate struggle with a guard of soldiers, and to take a dead body from its tomb at the dead of the night? Even if one or two of the disciples could have ventured on such an enterprise, could they have counted on the co-operation of the others? Would they not have dreaded betrayal by some of their companions, who, whether from motives of honesty or of rivalry, might have denounced the plot to the Jewish authorities?

And, once more, had they desired and dared to remove our Lord's Body from its grave, such a feat was obviously beyond their power. The tomb was guarded by soldiers. Every precaution had been taken by the Jews to make it secure.<sup>6</sup> The great stone at the entrance could not have been rolled away without much disturbance, even if the Body could have been removed without attracting attention. The character of the guards was at stake; had they countenanced or promoted any such crime their almost inevitable detection would have been followed by severe punishment. In after years St. Peter was released from prison by an angel,<sup>7</sup> but the sentries were punished by Herod with death. Certainly the guard at the sepulchre was largely bribed by the leading Jews to say that the Body of Jesus had been taken away by the disciples while they slept.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the eagerness of the soldiers to touch the money, they would have been unwilling to circulate such a report as this. And the Jews never ventured to treat it as practically true. When they imprisoned and scourged St. Peter and the other Apostles; when they persecuted first St.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 56; St. Mark xiv. 50.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 69-75; St. Mark xiv. 66-72.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xix. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xx. 19.

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 37.

<sup>6</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 66.

<sup>7</sup> Acts xii, 7-11.

<sup>8</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 13-15.

Stephen, and many another servant of Christ, they did not accuse their victims of having stolen Christ's Body from the grave, and then of having spread a false report of His Resurrection. The charge was simply that the Apostles and others had preached the Resurrection after being ordered to be silent.

A third question may be raised, as to the amount of positive testimony which goes to show that Jesus Christ did rise from the dead.

There is, first of all, the witness of all the Apostles. They affirmed publicly that during forty days they saw Jesus Christ alive; that they held converse with Him; that they ate and drank with Him; that they touched Him.<sup>1</sup> They gave their lives in attestation of this fact. Their conduct after the day of Pentecost is throughout that of men whose trustworthiness and sincerity of purpose are beyond dispute. You and I, unless strengthened by Divine grace, might too probably hesitate to give our lives for what we know to be undoubted truth. But, at least, we should not—I will not say—die, but even make any considerable sacrifice, for the sake of impressing the world with the truth of an occurrence which we believe to be in any degree doubtful.

Next, there is the testimony of a large number of persons besides the Apostles. Take the case of the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost.<sup>2</sup> Here were three thousand people professing belief in the Resurrection fifty days after the date of its occurrence. They had every means of verifying its truth or falsehood. They were on the spot. They could visit the tomb. They could collect and investigate the current stories. They could discuss matters with the Jews. They could cross-question the guards. They could compare, balance, analyse the conflicting opinions around them. They had unrivalled opportunities for satisfying themselves of its being a reality or a fiction. Yet at the risk of comfort, position, nay life, they publicly professed their belief in its truth. They could not be Christians without making this profession. And they had no hesitation about making it.

Or consider the case of the two hundred and fifty and more persons still living when St. Paul wrote the First Epistle to the Corinthians, who had seen the Risen Jesus on one occasion during the forty days. "After that He was seen of five

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 39, 40; St. John xx. 25, 27.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 41.



hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until this present, but some are fallen asleep."<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt about the document which contains this assertion. The most destructive of the negative schools of modern criticism ranks this First Epistle to the Corinthians among the four books of the New Testament whose genuineness and authenticity it holds to be beyond dispute. There is no reason for questioning the accuracy of the Apostle's information ; and the significance of the statement can hardly be exaggerated. Five hundred persons could not be simultaneously deluded. Their testimony would be considered decisive as to any ordinary occurrence, where men wished only to ascertain the simple truth

## II.

And the force of this body of testimony is not really weakened by objections which do not directly challenge it, and which turn on accessory or subordinate points.

For instance, it is said that the Evangelical accounts of the Resurrection itself, and of our Lord's subsequent appearances, are difficult to reconcile with each other. At first sight they are ; but only at first sight. In order to reconcile them two things are necessary : first, patience, and secondly, a determination to exclude everything from the narrative which does not lie in the text of the Gospels. Two-thirds of the supposed difficulties are created by the riotous imagination of the negative commentators. Left to themselves, the Evangelists do not indeed tell us a great deal that we should like to know. But they do not contradict each other. If they had forged the whole story, and had written with any degree of concert, they would have been at once more explicit and less careless about appearances than they are. They would have described Jesus Christ bursting forth from His grave in a blaze of splendour ; terrifying His guards ; welcoming His faithful followers, who would have been collected on the spot. They would have written as painters have painted ; without any admission of ignorance, without any reserve, without permitting any suspicion of differences. As it is, the differences are just what might be expected in four narratives of the same event, composed at different periods, by different authors, who had distinct

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.



sources of information at command. Each says what he has to say with blunt and simple directness ; without an eye to the statements of the others, or to the possible comments of hostile critics. To show their agreement in detail would carry us beyond our limits. Suffice it to say, that in describing the Resurrection, as elsewhere, Holy Scripture takes no precautions against adverse judgments. It speaks as might a perfectly truthful child in a court of justice, conscious only of its integrity, and leaving the task, whether of criticism or apology, wholly to others. It proceeds on the strong conviction, that in the end, here as in other matters, "Wisdom is justified of all her children."<sup>1</sup>

It is, further, objected that the Resurrection was not sufficiently public. Jesus Christ ought to have left His grave, so it is urged, in the sight of a crowd of lookers-on ; and, when risen, He ought to have hastened to show Himself to the persons least likely to believe in His Resurrection,—to the Jews at large, to the High Priests, to Pilate, to His executioners, even, it is of late hinted, to a scientific commission of some kind which, after careful investigation, might have drawn up a report upon the subject.

Here it is obvious, first of all, that the guards may very well have seen Jesus leave His tomb. Scripture says nothing on the point. But they were terrified, almost to death, at the sight of the angel of the sepulchre.<sup>2</sup> Any number of witnesses who had been present would have been as much frightened as were the guards. Our Lord's object was not to strike terror ; but to convince, to reassure, to console. It was not easy to do this, when the disciples first saw Him after He was risen. But nothing would have been gained by their seeing Him leave the tomb. They knew that He had been laid in it dead. They saw Him alive before their eyes. And they put the two facts together.

Nor is the old objection of Celsus, that Jesus Christ ought to have shown Himself to the Jews and to His judges in order to rebuke their unbelief, more reasonable. Had He appeared to the Chief Priests, would they have believed in Him ? Would they not have denied His identity, or argued that a devil had taken His form before their eyes, just as, of old, they had ascribed His miracles to Beelzebub ? There was no greater reason for our Lord's showing Himself to the unbelievers of

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke vii. 35.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 2-4.

that day than to the unbelievers of each succeeding century, from then till now. God gives evidence enough to make faith easy and reasonable. But He does not give that particular kind of evidence which captious unbelief may from time to time demand, possibly for no better reason than because it thinks that such evidence will not be given. They who cried on the day of Calvary, "Let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe Him,"<sup>1</sup> would not really have believed Him, if He had taken them at their word. Unbelief is the product of a particular state of heart and mind, much more than of the absence of some one kind of evidence. The Jews had ample opportunities of ascertaining that the Resurrection was a fact, if they had desired to do so. But, as it was, they were not in a mood to be convinced, even by the evidence of their senses. It was with them, as with the brethren of the Rich Man in the Parable: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."<sup>2</sup> If the testimony of the Apostles, and of so many other persons, was insufficient, the appearance of our Risen Lord Himself would not have done more than add to the list of their rejected opportunities, and to the sentence of their condemnation.

Far deeper than these objections is that which really lies against all miracles whatever, as being at variance with that conception of a rigid uniformity in the processes of nature, which is one of the intellectual fashions of our day. Suffice it to say, that any idea of natural law which is held to make a miracle impossible, is also inconsistent with belief in the existence of God. When a believer in God talks of a law of nature, he can never mean more than God's uniform mode of working. He cannot mean anything independent of God, any force or impact which, if originally due to Him, has now acquired a right to maintain itself in spite of Him, or is at any rate out of His reach. To hold this idea of law is to hold that God is not Master of the universe; in other words, that He is not Himself. That He works uniformly is a matter of observation, and is only what we should anticipate from that Law of Order which is an attribute of His Being. And this uniformity is the foil to the miracle, which purposely innovates on it. Without such general uniformity in the background there would be nothing striking in the miracle. But if God is Omnipotent, so that His eternal moral attributes alone limit

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xx vii. 42.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xvi. 31.

His powers of action, then it cannot be denied that miracle is always possible. And if God be a Moral Being, Who as such deems the interests of His moral creatures higher than those of the inanimate and irrational beings around, then miracle, at certain crises in human history, is even to be expected. The only real question for a serious believer in God is whether the producible evidence for any alleged miracle is sufficient.

From the nature of the case, it is impossible to give more than a scanty and imperfect outline of a great subject like the evidence for the Resurrection, within the compass of a sermon. But it is to be wished, in these days especially, that Christians would make themselves better acquainted with the grounds of their faith than they often are. Such old-fashioned but useful books as Sherlock's *Trial of the Witnesses*, in which the evidence for the Resurrection is discussed conformably with the rules of the English Bar, would do a great deal of good, if they were better known. Undoubtedly, new points have been raised since Sherlock's time; and to a certain extent the controversy has shifted its ground. But, in the main, his presentation of the case is of lasting value, and is better suited to our national tastes and temper than the works of some more recent apologists.

### III.

Here then we are coming round to the point from which we started. For it is natural to ask, Why, if the Resurrection can be proved by evidence so generally sufficient, it was at the time, and is still, rejected by a great many intelligent men? The answer to this natural and legitimate question is of practical importance to all of us.

There can, I apprehend, be no sort of doubt that if an ordinary historical occurrence, such as the death of Julius Caesar, were attested as clearly as the Resurrection of our Lord—not more clearly, nor less,—as having taken place nineteen centuries ago, all the world would believe it as a matter of course. Nay more, if an extraordinary occurrence, traversing the usual operations of God in nature, were similarly attested, it would be easily believed, if only it stood alone, as an isolated wonder, connected with no religious claim, implying no religious duties, appealing only to the understanding, and having no bearing, however remote, upon the will.

The reason why the Resurrection was not always believed

upon the evidence of those who witnessed to it is, because to believe it means, for a consistent and thoughtful man, to believe in and to accept a great deal else. To believe the Resurrection is to believe, implicitly, in the Christian Faith. The Divine Person of our Lord, the atoning work of our Lord, the teaching authority of our Lord, the efficacy of His Intercession in heaven, and of the great means of grace which He has given us on earth, depend on and are bound up with His Resurrection. It is no mere speculative question, whether Jesus Christ did or did not rise from the dead ; it is an eminently practical one. The intellect is not more interested in it, than the will ; perhaps it is even less interested. If the intellect alone could have the decision of the question in its keeping, the number of unbelievers would be comparatively small. The real difficulties of belief lie, generally speaking, with the will. And nothing is more certain, I may add, more alarming, than the power of the will to shape, check, promote, control conviction. The will too has a reasoning power of its own ; the will is, in a sense, another reason within us. It looks ahead ; it watches the proceedings of the understanding with a jealous scrutiny ; it watches, and, if need be, it interferes. It sees the understanding on the point of embracing a conviction, which means much more than speculative assent ; which means action or suffering, that is to say, something entirely within its own province—the province of the will. It sees the conviction, all but accepted ; it sees the understanding stretching out its arms to welcome the advancing truth ; and it mutters to itself,—“ This must not be, or I shall be compromised. I shall have to do or to endure what I do not like.” And such is the power of the will that it can give effect to this decision. It can baulk and thwart the action of the intellect ; give it a perverse twist, and even set it scheming how best to discredit or refute the truth which but now it was on the point of accepting. This is what happened to the Jews of the Pentecostal period. They had no prejudices against miracles. On the contrary, they expected miracles to occur from time to time. They entirely believed in astonishing miracles in their own past history ; although many of these miracles rested upon evidence far less cogent than the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Had it been for them only a speculative question, they would have believed in this too ; but so far from being a speculative question only, it was charged with practical consequences. The will of the Jew instinctively suggested to him : ‘ If Jesus

of Nazareth rose from His grave, then a great deal else follows for which I am not prepared : then He is the Messiah, and the present order of things will be seriously changed ; and new duties, new sacrifices, will be expected of me and mine. I must inquire, if His Resurrection be so very certain ; if there be not a natural explanation of it ; if it be not due to a trick, or to an hallucination. Anyhow it must not, it cannot, be accepted as true. It may triumph at the 'bar of probable evidence. But common sense, as I understand common sense, is against it.'

This, or something like this, is what the Jew would have thought to himself. And his will would have carried the day against his understanding. And thus we may understand what it is that the Spirit does to produce faith. He does not set aside or extinguish the operations of the natural reason ; reason too is a guide to truth which God has given us. But He does change the temper, or the direction of the will. And thus He sets the reason free to do justice to the evidence before it. It is thus that, within us, the Spirit beareth witness. The evidence for the Resurrection is of such a character that an unspiritual man, with no more than average powers, who understands the value of a probable as distinct from a mathematical argument, can see its strength and force. But this perception is useless, unless the will be ready to do its part, or at least not to interfere with the verdict of the intellect. And it is the Spirit Who secures this : He

Bends the stubborn heart and will,  
Melts the frozen, warms the chill,  
Guides the steps that go astray.

The evidence for the Resurrection was not stronger on the Day of Pentecost than it was on the day before. But the Descent of the Spirit made it morally possible for three thousand converts to do that evidence something like justice.

And now we can see why St. Paul makes so much of faith,—especially in a Risen Christ,—in his great Epistles. Faith is not merely the assent of the understanding : it is also the assent of the will. It is even less an intellectual than a moral act. And thus it is a test and criterion not only or chiefly of the worth of a man's head-piece, but pre-eminently, of the rectitude of his dispositions, of the goodness of his heart. This is one reason why it justifies ; in an act of faith the whole moral nature concurs in the justifying assent to revealed



truth. If the understanding were alone concerned there would be no more reason for our being justified by faith in a Crucified and Risen Christ than for our being justified by our assent to the conclusion of a problem in Euclid. It is because the will must indorse the verdict of the understanding, and so must mean obedience as well as assent, that "by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."<sup>1</sup>

At the close of Easter Week, let us endeavour to remember this. Pray for that Divine Spirit Who witnesses to the Resurrection, as in the sacred Books of Scripture, so by His action upon the hearts and wills of men. Remember that as no man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost,<sup>2</sup> so no man can profess to any purpose faith in Christ's Resurrection but by the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit that beareth witness, now as nineteen centuries ago, by that influence on the will of man, which leaves the intellect at liberty to do justice to the evidence before it. Pray that most Blessed Spirit so to touch your heart and will that you may have no reason for wishing the Resurrection to be untrue. Pray for this His gracious assistance; that you may recover or strengthen the great grace of faith, and have your part in that Apostolical Promise—"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii. 8.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 3.<sup>3</sup> Rom. x. 9.

## SERMON VI.

### THE RESURRECTION INEVITABLE.

ACTS II. 24.

*Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death : because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.*

THIS is the language of the first Christian Apostle, in the first sermon that was ever preached in the Church of Christ. St. Peter is accounting for the miraculous gift of languages on the Day of Pentecost. After observing that it was, after all, only a fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel<sup>1</sup> about the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days, he proceeds to trace it to its cause. It was the work, he says, of Jesus Christ, now ascended into heaven ;—"He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear." But Jesus Christ, he argues, had really ascended into heaven, because He had first really risen from the grave ; and it is to St. Peter's way of accounting for Christ's Resurrection that I invite your attention to-day—as being the first Apostolic statement on the subject that was given to the world. And certainly, even if the point were only one of antiquarian interest, it would be full of attraction for every intelligent man to know how the first Christians thought about the chief truths of their Faith ; considering the influence which that Faith has had and still has on the development of the human race. But for us, Christians, concern in this matter is more exacting and urgent. Our hopes and fears, our depressions and our enthusiasms, our improvement or our deterioration, are bound up with it. "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain." Let us then listen to what the Apostle St. Peter says about a subject upon which his opportunities, to say nothing of higher credentials, qualified him to speak so authoritatively.

<sup>1</sup> Joel ii. 28, 29.



## I.

First of all, then, St. Peter states the fact that Christ had risen from the dead. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." Let us remember that he is preaching in Jerusalem, the scene of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, and, as his sermon shows, to some<sup>1</sup> who had taken part in the scenes of the Crucifixion. Not more than seven weeks have passed since these events,—about the time that has passed since the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. And in Jerusalem, we may be sure, men did not live as fast as they do in an European capital, in this age of telegraphs and railroads. An event like the Crucifixion, in a town of that size, far removed from the greater centres of human life, would have occupied general attention for a considerable period. It would have been discussed and re-discussed in all its bearings. All that happened at the time, and immediately afterwards, the supposed disappointment of the disciples and ruin of the cause, as well as the agony and humiliation of the Master, would have been still ordinary topics of conversation in most circles of Jewish society. It was then to persons keenly interested in the subject, and who had opportunities of testing the truth of what he said, that St. Peter states so calmly and unhesitatingly the fact of the Resurrection. He states it as just as much a fact of history as the Crucifixion, in which his hearers had taken part. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:" and then he adds, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death."<sup>2</sup> "This Jesus," he adds a little afterwards, "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses."<sup>3</sup> Not one or two favoured disciples; but all, even the doubter, all had seen their beloved Master. They had heard the tones of that familiar Voice; they had seen the wounds of the Passion; they had recognised in repeated conversations the continuity of heart, of thought, of purpose. It was the Jesus of old days, only invested with a new and awful glory. On the very day that He rose, He had been

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 23.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 22-24.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 32.

seen five times. And "He showed Himself alive after His Passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of His disciples forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup>

Some twenty-six years later, when St. Paul wrote his First Apostolical Letter to the Church of Corinth, there were, he says, more than two hundred and fifty persons still alive who had seen Jesus Christ after His Resurrection on a single occasion.<sup>2</sup> The number of witnesses to the fact of the Resurrection, to whom St. Peter could appeal, and whom his hearers might cross-question if they liked, will account for the simplicity and confidence of his assertion.

In those days men had not learnt to think more of abstract theories than of well-attested facts. The world had not yet heard of that singular state of mind which holds that an *a priori* doctrine about the nature of things, or, stranger still, an existing temper or mood of human thought, is a sufficient reason for refusing to listen to the evidence which may be produced in favour of a fact. Nobody, it may be added, who professed to believe in an Almighty God, thought it reverent or reasonable to say that He could not for sufficient reasons modify His ordinary rules of working, if He chose to do so.

St. Peter then preached the Resurrection as a fact, and, as we know, with great and immediate results. But how did he account for the Resurrection? what was the reason which he gave for its having happened at all? This is the second point, to which I invite your attention; and it will detain us somewhat longer than the first

## II.

St. Peter, then, says that Christ was raised from the dead, "because it was not possible that He should be holden of" death. Thus St. Peter's first thought about this matter is the very opposite to that of many persons in our day. They say that no evidence will convince them that Christ has risen, because they hold it to be antecedently impossible that He should rise. St. Peter, on the other hand, almost speaks as if he could dispense with any evidence, so certain is he that Jesus Christ must rise. In point of fact, as we know, St. Peter had his own experience to fall back upon;<sup>3</sup> he had seen his Risen Master on the day of His Resurrection, and often

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 34.

since. But so far was this evidence of his senses from causing him any perplexity, that it only fell in with the anticipations which he had now formed on other and independent grounds. "It was not possible," he says, "that Christ should be holden, or imprisoned, by death." It will do us good, my brethren, as fellow-believers with St. Peter, to spend some little time upon his grounds for saying this ; to consider, so far as we may, the reasons of this Divine impossibility.

And here, first of all, we find the reason which lay, so to speak, closest to the conclusion, and which was intended to convince the Apostle's hearers, in the sermon itself. "It was not possible that Christ should be holden of death ; *for* David speaketh concerning Him." It was then Jewish prophecy which forbade Christ to remain in His grave, and made His Resurrection nothing less than a necessity. As to the principle of this argument there would have been no controversy between St. Peter and the Jews. The Jews believed in the reality and force of prophecy—of that variety of prophecy which foretells strictly future events—just as distinctly as did Christians. The prophets, in the belief of the Jews, were the confidants of God. He whispered into their souls, by His Spirit, His secret resolutions for the coming time. "Surely," exclaims the prophet Amos, "surely the Lord will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets."<sup>1</sup> And when once God had thus spoken, His word, it was felt by Jews and Christians, stood sure.<sup>2</sup> His gifts and calling were without repentance.<sup>3</sup> The prophetic word became, in virtue of God's Moral Attributes, a restraint upon that liberty of which it was the product, until it was fulfilled. It constituted within the limits of its application a law of necessity, to which men and events, and, if need were, nature had to bend. And for all who believed in its Author the supposition that it would come to nothing after all, was, to use St. Peter's phrase, "not possible." It could not return empty ; it must accomplish the work for which God had sent it forth ; since it bound Him to an engagement with those who uttered and with those who heard His message.

Obviously enough, the true drift of a prophecy may easily be mistaken. God is not responsible for the eccentric guesses as to His meaning in which well-meaning men of vagrant imaginations may possibly indulge. We have lived in this

<sup>1</sup> Amos iii. 7.<sup>2</sup> Numb. xxiii. 19.<sup>3</sup> Rom. xi. 29.

generation to hear some very confident guesses, based on the supposed meaning of prophecy, respecting the end of the world, or some impending general catastrophe. But the dates assigned for such occurrences have passed. And religion would be seriously discredited, if the Sacred Word itself were at fault, instead of the fervid imagination of some incautious expositor. But where a prediction is clear, it does bind Him Who is its real Author to some fulfilment, which, in the event, will be recognised as such. And such a prediction of the Resurrection of Messiah St. Peter finds in Psalm xvi., where David,—as more completely in Psalm xxii.,—loses the sense of his own personal circumstances in the impetus and ecstasy of the prophetic spirit, and describes a Personality of Which indeed he was a type, but Which altogether transcends him.

“Therefore My heart is glad,  
And My glory rejoiceth :  
My flesh also shall rest in hope.  
For Thou wilt not leave My Soul in hell ;  
Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption.  
Thou wilt show Me the path of life :  
In Thy Presence is fulness of joy ;  
At Thy Right Hand there are pleasures for evermore.”<sup>1</sup>

David, so argues St. Peter, utters these words ; but they are not strictly true of David. “David,” he says, “is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is among us unto this day.” Or, as St. Paul states, when appealing to this very Psalm in his sermon at Antioch in Pisidia, “David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption. But He, Whom God raised up, saw no corruption.”<sup>2</sup> The meaning of the Psalm was so clear to some Jewish doctors, that, unable as they were to reconcile it with David’s history, they invented the fable, that his body was miraculously preserved from corruption. David, however, was really speaking in the Person of Messiah. And his language created the necessity that Messiah should rise from the dead ; or, as St. Peter puts it, his language made it impossible that Messiah should be holden by death. God had spoken, in other passages, no doubt. But He spoke with great clearness in this. And His Word could not return unto Him empty.

Observe, here, that St. Peter had not always felt and thought thus. He had known this Psalm all his life. But

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xvi. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 36, 37.

long after he had followed Jesus Christ about Galilee and Judæa he had been ignorant of its true meaning. Only little by little do any of us learn God's truth and will. And so lately as the morning of the Resurrection, St. John says of both St. Peter and himself that "as yet they knew not the scripture, that He must rise again from the dead."<sup>1</sup> Since then the Holy Spirit had come down, and had poured a flood of light into the minds of the Apostles and over the sacred pages of the Old Testament. And thus a necessity for the Resurrection, which even Jews ought to recognise, was now abundantly plain to them. May that same Eternal Spirit teach us, as then He taught our spiritual forefathers, the full meaning of His Word!

A second reason which would have shaped St. Peter's language lay in the character of his Master Jesus Christ. It was our Lord's character not less assuredly than His miracles which drew human hearts to Him, and led or forced them to give up all that this world could offer for the happiness of following and serving Him. Now, of our Lord's character a leading feature was its simple truthfulness. It was morally impossible for Him to hold out prospects which would never be realised or to use words which He did not mean. Nay, He insisted upon simple sincerity of language in those who came into His company. He would not allow the young man to call Him "Good Master,"<sup>2</sup> when the expression was a mere phrase in His Mouth. He would not accept professions to follow Him whithersoever He went, or aspirations to sit on His Right Hand and on His Left in His kingdom till men had weighed their words, and were sure that they meant all that such words involved. Unless then He was like those Pharisees whom He censured for laying burdens upon others which they would not touch themselves, it might be taken for granted that if He promised He would perform; that His promise made performance morally necessary, and non-performance morally impossible. This was the feeling of His disciples about Him. He was too wise to predict the impossible. He was too sincere to promise what He did not mean.

Now Jesus Christ had again and again said that He would be put to a violent death, and that after dying He would rise again. Sometimes, as to the Jews in the Temple, when He cleansed it in the early days of His ministry, He expressed

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 9.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark x. 17.



His meaning in the language of metaphor. "Destroy," He said to them, "this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up."<sup>1</sup> The Jews rallied Him on the absurdity of undertaking to reconstruct in three days an edifice which it had taken forty-six years to build. The drift of the words may have been made plain to the disciples by a gesture which accompanied them; and in later years they understood the sense in which He termed His Body a Temple, namely, because in Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes He fell back upon ancient Hebrew history, and compared that which would befall Himself to the miraculous adventure of the prophet who shrank from the mission assigned to him by God. When the Pharisees, irritated at His stern rebuke of their blasphemous levity in ascribing His miracle on the blind and dumb man to the activity of Beelzebub, asked Him for a "sign," that is, for some credential of His mission, He contented Himself with saying that as Jonah had been three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so would the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth.<sup>3</sup> In other words, His right to speak and act as He did would be proved by His rising from the dead. With His disciples He used neither metaphor nor historic parallel. He said simply, on three occasions at the least,<sup>4</sup> as the hour of His sufferings approached, that He should be crucified, and should rise again from death. Peter himself had, on the first of these occasions, rebuked Him, as we know, and had been rebuked in turn.<sup>5</sup> Thus He was pledged, if we may reverently say so, to this particular act. He was pledged to the Jewish people, pledged to its ruling classes, pledged especially to His Own chosen band of faithful followers. He could not have remained in His grave—I will not say without dishonour, but—without causing in others a revulsion of feeling such as is provoked by the exposure of baseless pretensions.

It may indeed be urged that the Resurrection foretold by Christ was not a literal resurrection of His dead Body, but only a recovery of His ascendancy, His credit, His authority; obscured as these had been for a while in the apprehension of His disciples and of the world, by the tragedy of the Crucifixion. The word Resurrection, according to this supposition, is in His Mouth a purely metaphorical expression. It is used to describe not anything that affected Jesus Christ Himself,

<sup>1</sup> St. John ii. 19.<sup>2</sup> Col. ii. 9.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xii. 40.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xvi. 21; St. Mark ix. 31; x. 32-34.<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 22, 23.

but only a revolution of opinion and feeling about Him in the minds of others. Socrates had had to drink the fatal hemlock ; and the body of Socrates had long since mingled with the dust. But Socrates, it might be said, had risen, in the intellectual triumphs of his pupils, and in the enthusiastic admiration of succeeding ages ; the method and words of Socrates had been preserved for all time in a literature that will never die. If Christ was to be put to death by crucifixion, He would triumph, even after a death so shameful and degrading, as Socrates and others had triumphed before Him. To imagine for Him an actual exit from His tomb, is said to be a crude literalism, natural to uncultivated ages, but impossible, when the finer suggestiveness of human language has been felt to transcend the letter.

An obvious reply to this explanation is, that it arbitrarily makes our Lord use literal and metaphorical language in two successive clauses of a single sentence. He is literal, it seems, when He predicts His Crucifixion ; there is no doubt about that. The world has always agreed with the Church as to the fact of His being crucified. Tacitus<sup>1</sup> mentions His death as well as the Evangelists. But if our Lord is to be understood literally, when He foretells His Cross, why is He to be thought metaphorical when He foretells His Resurrection ? Why should not His Resurrection, if it be only metaphorical, be preceded by a metaphorical crucifixion ; a crucifixion of thought, or will, or reputation,—not the literal nailing of a human body to a wooden cross ? Why does this fastidious temper, which shrinks from the idea of a literal rising from a literal grave, not shrink equally from a literal nailing to a literal cross ? It is impossible seriously to maintain on any grounds consistent with an honest interpretation of His Words, that our Lord Himself could have meant that He would be literally crucified, but would only rise in a metaphorical sense. Surely He meant that the one event would be just as much or just as little a matter of fact as the other. And any other construction of His Words would never have originated except with those who wish to combine a lingering respect for His language, with a total disbelief in the supreme miracle which has made Him what He is to Christendom. No ; it is clear that, if Jesus Christ had not risen from the grave He would not have kept His engagements with His disciples or with the world. This was the feeling of those who knew and loved

<sup>1</sup> *Annal.* xv. 44.



Him best. This was the feeling of St. Peter, ripened no doubt but lately into a sharply-defined conviction, but based on years of intimate companionship ;—when Christ, so scrupulously truthful and so invariably wise, had once said that He would rise from death, any other event was simply impossible. All was really staked on His rising again. And when He did rise, “He was declared to be the Son of God with power, in respect of His Holy and Higher Nature, by the Resurrection from the dead.”<sup>1</sup> Those who cling to His human character, yet deny His Resurrection, would do well to consider, that they must choose between their moral enthusiasm and their unbelief ; since it is the character of Christ, even more than the language of prophecy, which made the idea that He would not rise after death impossible for His first disciples.

Not that we have yet exhausted St. Peter’s reasons for this remarkable expression. You will remember, my friends, that in the sermon which St. Peter preached to a crowd, after the healing of the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, he went over much of the ground which is traversed in this first sermon on the Day of Pentecost. He told his hearers among other things that they had “killed the Prince of Life, Whom God raised from the dead.”<sup>2</sup> Remark that striking title, “The Prince of Life.” Not merely does it show how high above all earthly royalties was the Crucified Saviour in the heart and faith of His Apostle. It connects the thought of St. Peter in this early stage of his ministry with the language of his Divine Master on the one side, and that of His Apostles St. Paul and St. John upon the other. Our Lord had said, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life ;”<sup>3</sup> He had explained the sense of this last word “Life” by saying that “as the Father hath Life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have Life in Himself.”<sup>4</sup> He had complained to the men of His time, “Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life.”<sup>5</sup> And St. John said of Him that “in Him was Life :”<sup>6</sup> and St. Paul, in to-day’s Epistle, calls Him “Christ, Who is our Life.”<sup>7</sup> When, then, St. Peter names Him the “Prince of Life,” he is referring to this same truth about his Master. And it is in fact the keynote of the Gospel.

What is life ? That is a question which no man even now

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 4.    <sup>2</sup> Acts iii. 15.    <sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 6.    <sup>4</sup> Ibid. v. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. i. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Col. iii. 4.

can answer. We do not know what life is in itself. We only register its symptoms. We see growth; we see movement; and we say, Here is life. It exists in one degree in the tree; in a higher in the animal; in a higher still in man. In beings above man, we cannot doubt, it is to be found in some yet grander form. But in all these cases it is a gift from another: and having been given, it might be modified or withdrawn. Who is He in Whom life resides originally; He Who owes it to no other; He from Whom no other can withdraw it? Only the Self-Existent lives of right. He lives because He cannot but live; He lives an original as distinct from a derived life. This is true of the Eternal Three, Who yet are One. But Revelation assures us that it is only true of the Son and the Holy Spirit, because by an unbegun, unending communication of Deity, They receive such Life from the Eternal Father. Hence our Lord says, "As the Father hath Life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have Life in Himself."<sup>1</sup> Not merely Life, but "Life in Himself." Thus, with the Eternal Giver, the Eternal Receiver is Fountain and Source of Life. With reference to all created beings, He is the Life,—their Creator, their Upholder, their End. "For," says St. Paul, "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible; whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."<sup>2</sup>

This then is the full sense of St. Peter's expression, "The Prince of Life." And in the truth which it teaches as to our Lord's jurisdiction over life, based on the truth of His Eternal Nature, we may trace a third reason for St. Peter's expression in the text. How could the very Lord and Source of Life be subdued by death? If, for reasons of wisdom and mercy, He subjected the Nature which He had made His Own to the king of terrors, this was surely not in the course of nature; it was a violence to nature that this should be. And therefore when the object had been achieved, He would rise, St. Peter implies, by an inevitable rebound, by the force of things, by the inherent energy of His irrepressible Life. From St. Peter's point of view, the real wonder would be if such a Being were not to rise. The pains of death were loosed,—not by an extraordinary effort, as in your case or mine—but because it was impossible that He, the Prince of Life, should be holden of it.

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 16, 17.

Observe, then, my friends, how St. Peter deals with this great subject. He now looks at it from above, so to say, rather than from below. He here asks himself what his faith about the Son of God points to, rather than what history proves to have taken place. He is for the moment more concerned for his Master's honour than with the significance and value of His acts for us. To St. Peter it is less strange that there should be an innovation upon nature such as the resurrection of a dead body than it would be if such a Being as Jesus Christ, having been put to death, did not rise. St. Peter is very far from being indifferent to the proof that Christ did rise; indeed he often and earnestly insists on it. But just as St. John always calls Christ's miracles His "works,"<sup>1</sup> meaning that they were only what such an One as He might be expected to do; so St. Peter treats His Resurrection from the dead as perfectly natural to Him; nay, as an event which any man or angel with sufficient knowledge might have calculated beforehand, just as astronomers predict unerringly the movements of the heavenly bodies. God hath raised Jesus from the dead, he says, because it was impossible that death should continue to hold Him.<sup>2</sup>

### III.

Yes. The buried Christ could not really remain in His grave. He was raised from it in virtue of a Divine necessity; and this necessity, while in its original form strictly proper to His case, points to kindred necessities which affect His servants and His Church. Let us in conclusion briefly consider them.

Note, first, the impossibility, for us Christians too, of being buried for ever in the tomb in which we shall each be laid at death. We too, after the death and burial which awaits each one of us, shall rise; nay, we must rise. In this, as in other matters, "as He," our Lord, "is, so are we in this world."<sup>3</sup> To us as to Him, although in a different way, God has pledged Himself. There is a difference indeed, such as might be expected between our case and His. In Him an internal vital force made Resurrection from death necessary; in us there is no such intrinsic force, only a power guaranteed to us from without. He could say of the Temple of His Body, "I will

<sup>1</sup> St. John vii. 3, 21; x. 25, 32; xiv. 12; xv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> 1 St. John iv. 17.

raise it up in three days :” we can only say that God will raise us up, we know not when. But this we do know, that “if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”<sup>1</sup> This we do know, that “we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that which he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”<sup>2</sup> The law of justice and the law of love combine to create a necessity which requires “a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust.”<sup>3</sup>

It is not always easy even for believing Christians to do justice to this solemn and certain truth. The gradual decay of vital force during illness, the dissolution and corruption of the body after death, the chemistry not less than the pathos of the grave, combine to make us forget Whose word it is that warrants for each one of us a Resurrection. And yet He “will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.”<sup>4</sup> Death is not an eternal sleep ; the tomb is not the final resting-place of the bodies of those whom we have loved. The empty sepulchre at Jerusalem on Easter morning is the warrant of a new life, strictly continuous with this, and, if we are faithful, much more glorious

See here, also, the principle of moral resurrections in the Church of Christ. As with the bodies of the faithful so it is with the Church of Christ. The Church of Christ is, according to St. Paul’s teaching, Christ Himself in history. St. Paul says as much when he tells us that “as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.”<sup>5</sup> The Church is Christ’s Body, the fulness of Him That filleth all in all.<sup>6</sup> But the force of this language is limited by the fact, equally warranted by Scripture—that the Church has in it a human element, which, unlike the Humanity of Christ, is weak and sinful. The Church of Corinth itself, to which St. Paul wrote the sentence which I just now quoted, was filled with strife,<sup>7</sup> irreverence,<sup>8</sup> even worse sins than these.<sup>9</sup> Again and again in the course

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 11.<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 10.<sup>3</sup> Acts xxiv. 15.<sup>4</sup> Phil. iii. 21.<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 12.<sup>6</sup> Eph. i. 22, 23.<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 3.<sup>8</sup> Ibid. xi. 18–22.<sup>9</sup> Ibid. v. 1.

of her history large portions of the Christian Church have seemed to be dead and buried,—buried away in some one of the lumber-rooms of the past. And the world has gone its way, rejoicing as ‘if all was over; as if henceforth unbelief and ungodliness would never be disturbed in their reign on earth by any protest from heaven. But suddenly the tomb has opened; there has been a moral movement, a profound agitation in men’s consciences, a feeling that all is far from right. And then has arisen a new spirit of devotion, social stir, literary activity, conspicuous self-sacrifice; and, lo! the world awakes to an uneasy suspicion that “John the Baptist has risen from the dead, and that mighty works do show forth themselves in him.”<sup>1</sup> The truth is that Christ has again burst His tomb and is abroad among men. So it was after the moral degradation of the Papacy in the tenth century; so it was after the recrudescence of paganism by the Renaissance in the fifteenth; so it was in this country after the great triumph of Puritan misbelief and profanity in the seventeenth century, and of indifference to vital religion in the eighteenth. The oppression, the degradation, the enfeeblement, of the Church of Christ is possible enough; too generally, the world only binds and makes sport of Samson, because Samson has yielded to the blandishments of Delilah. But there is a latent force in the Church of Christ, which asserts and must assert itself, from generation to generation. If the Crucifixion is re-enacted, in the Holy Body; if, as St. Paul puts it, we fill up, from century to century, that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ;<sup>2</sup> the Resurrection is re-enacted too. It is not possible that the Body of Christ, instinct with His force and vital Spirit, should be holden of death; each apparent collapse and failure is followed by an outburst of energy and moral glory, which reveals the Presence of the Living Christ; His Presence Who, if crucified through weakness, yet liveth by the Power of God.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, note here what is or ought to be the governing principle of our own personal life. If we have been laid in the tomb of sin, it ought to be impossible that we should be holden of sin. I say “ought to be;” because, as a matter of fact, it is not impossible. God only is responsible for the resurrection of the Christian’s body, and for the perpetuity, through its successive resurrections, of the Christian Church; and therefore it is impossible that either the Church or our bodies should

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xiv. 2.<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 24.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 4.



permanently succumb to the empire of death. But God, Who raises our bodies whether we will or not, does not raise our souls from sin, unless we correspond with His grace ; and it is quite in our power to refuse this correspondence. That we should rise then from sin is a moral, not a physical necessity ; but surely we ought to make it as real a necessity as if it were physical. For any who feels in his soul the greatness and love of Jesus Christ it ought to be morally impossible to remain in the tomb : "Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."<sup>1</sup> If Lent is the season for mourning the past, Easter is the season for those bracing definite resolutions and vigorous efforts which control the future. If we were unaided and alone, such efforts and resolutions would be failures indeed ; like the vain flutterings of a bird against the wires of the cage which imprisons it. But He Who has "broken the gates of brass, and smitten the bars of iron in sunder,"<sup>2</sup> will not fail us, if we ask and seek His strength ; and the permanence and splendour of His Life in glory may, and should be, the warrant of our own.

One word more. A real Resurrection with Christ will make and leave some definite traces upon life. Let us resolve this day to do or leave undone some one thing which will mark a new beginning : conscience will instruct us, if we allow it to do so. If any of you are looking out for a way of showing gratitude to our Risen Saviour, let me suggest that you should send the best contribution you can afford to the Mission at Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa. There a small band of noble men, under the leadership of a bishop of Apostolical character,<sup>3</sup> is making efforts worthy of the best days of the Church to propagate the Faith among races, to whom no depths of degradation and misery that are possible for human beings are unknown, but who are as capable as ourselves of rising with Christ to a new life of moral and mental glory. According to accounts which have just reached this country, at the very moment when new and unanticipated opportunities are presenting themselves, and such an inroad upon heathendom, and the slavery and vices which mark its empire, is possible, as has never been possible before, their scanty means altogether fail these noble missionaries. They literally have not enough to eat ; much less can they attempt the new enter-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cvii. 16.

<sup>3</sup> The late Bishop Steere, who has since gone to his reward.



prises of Christian charity which their circumstances imperatively demand. Shall we leave them to despondency, to retreat, to failure; with the heathen before them stretching out their hands unto God, and with the impure imposture of the false prophet hard by, ready to take a cruel advantage of our supineness? Surely it cannot but be that some who hear me will make an effort worthy of our Easter gratitude in behalf of an object, than which none can well be imagined more truly Christian and philanthropic, more worthy of men who humbly hope that they have part in the First Resurrection, and in all that it implies.

## SERMON VII.

### THE REALITY OF THE RESURRECTION.

ST. LUKE XXIV. 39.

*Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.*

THIS saying of our Risen Lord to the ten Apostles and their associates is not to be confused with a somewhat similar but distinct saying to St. Thomas, "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My Hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My Side: and be not faithless, but believing."<sup>1</sup> The occasions were different. One was on the evening of the day of the Resurrection; the other a week later. The states of mind to which our Lord addressed Himself were different. The ten were in a state of terror and perplexity: Thomas a hard-headed doubter. The words are different. The ten are only invited to handle the limbs of Christ: Thomas is to thrust his hand into the open side. To the timid Apostles our Lord offers consolation: to the sceptical Thomas He presents the opportunity of a verifying experiment. With Thomas He expostulates: with the ten He soothes. To Thomas He says: "Be not faithless, but believing;" to the ten, "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?"<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to understand the anxious thoughts, the terror and affright, of the Apostles. They had met, together with a few adherents, possibly at the house of Zebedee, where they might feel safe from the violence of the Jewish mob. They had met together, with full hearts, that they might talk over one with another the events of that momentous day. They had heard the report of the Holy Women. They were saying one to another, as if to reassure each other by the act of repetition, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 27.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 38.

Simon.”<sup>1</sup> They had just learned what had happened on the Emmaus road, and how, when the walk was over, the Divine Stranger had been recognised, and how He had taken His leave. They were filled with conflicting emotions, no one of which had as yet the mastery,—with hope, delight, apprehension, fear. They were still listening to or discussing the report of the disciples from Emmaus ; and the doors were fast shut so that no stranger or spy might betray their precious secret, when, lo ! “as they thus spake, He Himself stood in the midst of them, and said, Peace be unto you.”<sup>2</sup> The doors had not opened ; there had been no movement as from the entrance to the midst of the apartment. At one moment there was vacancy, at another He was there, and in the act of blessing them. Nor was this the impression, the illusion, as it might have been thought, of a single mind. They all saw Him ; they all heard Him ; and their first and common feeling was one of terror.

What was the cause of their terror ? It was their belief that they were close to a disembodied spirit, which, for the moment, had simulated bodily form, and had uttered a human voice. However we may explain it, there is no doubt that the real or fancied appearance of a human spirit, without the body, has, in all ages, been more than unwelcome to man ; it has been terrible. It may be that to a composite being such as ours, in which body and soul are so subtly and intimately intertwined, the divorce between the two, when thus vividly brought before us, seems to suggest unnatural violence as nothing else can. It may be that our ignorance of the capacities of a disembodied spirit, of its power to affect ourselves in a hundred ways now that it lives under totally new conditions, may explain the universal dread which it inspires. It may be—nay rather, it probably is—the case, that the quickened sense of the nearness and reality of the invisible world has a terror for us sinners, because we know that we are sinners. A perfectly sinless man would gaze at a ghost with reverent but untroubled curiosity. Certain it is that, for ordinary men, as in the days of Eliphaz the Temanite, so in all ages of the world’s history, to see, or think we see, a disembodied spirit inspires dread : —

“ Fear came upon me, and trembling,  
Which made all my bones to shake.  
Then a spirit passed before my face :

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 36.

The hair of my flesh stood up :  
It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof :  
An image was before mine eyes."<sup>1</sup>

"Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Our Lord had not to wait for an answer to His question. His next words show that He knew how the Ten would have answered it. "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." They were not, as they fancied, in the presence of a spirit divorced from its earthly tenement by the rude hand of death. He Who stood before them was death's Conqueror, and bade them test the reality of His recovered life.

My brethren, death would seem this year to have been more busy than is his wont in striking down those whose disappearance from our midst makes us all think more seriously of the lessons of Easter. On Easter Day we had to deplore the loss of a man<sup>2</sup> who had presided over the great profession of the law with signal ability and distinction; and to-day his widowed successor mourns one whose graces and virtues justly endeared her to a wide circle of friends and dependants, and who, it is believed, laid the foundation of the illness which has brought her to her grave, by her benevolent labours among the sick and poor at the East end of London.<sup>3</sup>

But to-day, also, it would be impossible to forget another public loss which yet more closely touches us, who pass our lives under the shadow of this great Church.<sup>4</sup> More than a hundred years have passed since a Lord Mayor of London last died during his year of office. The incessant demands upon the time and strength of the Chief Magistrate of this great city, which bring him before the country and the world more often and more prominently than any Englishman who is not directly concerned in the business of Government, are so little in harmony with the thought of death, that they might almost seem to bar his approach. As the bell of St. Paul's tolled forth its mournful message yesterday morning, we Londoners reflected, that in the late Lord Mayor we had lost a civic ruler, who had already given ample proof that he was equal to the exacting duties and to the splendid opportunities of his great

<sup>1</sup> Job iv. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Earl Cairns, late Lord Chancellor, died April 2, 1885.

<sup>3</sup> The Countess of Selborne, died April 10, 1885.

<sup>4</sup> George Swan Nottage, Esq., Lord Mayor of London, died at the Mansion House, on Saturday, April 11, 1885.

position. His ready sympathy with the best enthusiasms that stir the heart of the country, and with every effort of public or private benevolence, and his conscientious devotedness to the more immediate claims of his office, and to the interests of his fellow-citizens, had already won for him general good-will and respect, and had created a confident anticipation that his year of rule would hereafter rank with the most useful and distinguished of those which had preceded it. ' But, once again, we have learnt the lesson, that death, like God, is no respecter of persons ; and that no position, however distinguished, no devotion to duty, however assiduous, no tribute of respect and popularity, however general, well deserved, and sincere, can insure any man against his assaults. Certainly this year the lessons of Easter, always solemn, have been illustrated for us in London by events of unwonted solemnity.

## I.

Let us return to the Upper Chamber, and note, first of all, the nature of our Lord's Risen Body. It was the Body Which had been born of the Virgin Mary, and had been nailed to the Cross ; the Body from Which life had been expelled by the painful death of crucifixion, ere It had been buried in the grave of Joseph of Arimathæa. This identity is insisted on by our Lord. He pointed to the Wounds which had been made on the preceding Friday : " Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself." And then, to meet the suspicion that a spiritual essence of some kind was personating a bodily form, He adds : " Handle Me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." Mark that " flesh and bones." It sets aside the notion that the Body of the Risen Saviour was somehow a body, but not real flesh ; bodily form, without nerves and veins, without bodily substance ; an etherealised likeness of the Body Which had been crucified, not the crucified Body Itself. " A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." And this literal indentity of the risen with the crucified Body of Jesus was made good by another test. When our Lord had shown to His disciples His Hands and His Feet, and they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, He said unto them, " Have ye here any meat ? " He would show that the digestive and nutritive functions of His Risen Body were intact. At the great festivals, fish was brought to Jerusalem in quantities from the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean coast ; and, if it were to be

had anywhere, it would be forthcoming at the house of Zebedee. So "they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honey-comb ; and He took it, and did eat before them."<sup>1</sup>

Our Lord's Risen Body, then, was literally the very Body Which had been crucified ; and yet It had properties attaching to It which distinguished It. We cannot indeed say of His Body, as of our own, that it was sown in corruption ; since corruption is the brand and note of sin, and God would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. It was indeed sown in dishonour and raised in glory. It was sown in weakness and raised in power. But especially, It was sown a natural body, that is, a body governed by ordinary natural laws ; and raised a spiritual body, that is, a body which, while retaining physical substance and unimpaired identity, was yet endowed and interpenetrated with some of the properties of spirit.<sup>2</sup> Of these our Lord had given proof in His sudden disappearance from the two disciples at Emmaus, and in His presenting Himself as suddenly to the astonished disciples in Jerusalem, while the doors were shut, and without any movement to the spot at which He appeared. And if it be asked, how could a solid and palpable Body, Which men could handle, Which could eat and converse, thus vanish and reappear, like a ghost, it is better at once to say that we do not know. Only, our ignorance of the explanation of such a matter as this by no means proves that no explanation could be given, still less that the supposition of a physical body traversed by spiritual properties is an impossible supposition. Impossible indeed ! What do we know of the possibilities—the abstract possibilities of being,—to decide, on the strength of our narrow experience, that this or that mode of existence is impossible ? Impossible ! Have we not, I will not say sufficient humility, but sufficient imagination, to conceive that the Infinite Creator is not limited in resources ; that we ourselves need not have had these bodies, of this particular shape, or these minds, with this particular assortment of faculties ; and that if He pleases to enrich a Body such as ours with one or more properties belonging to another order or sphere of being, He is not debarred from doing so by the observations which we have made, in our note-books or our memories, respecting His ordinary rules of working ? Undoubtedly our Lord's Risen Body had properties which belong to spirit ; but they did not suspend or impair Its reality

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 42, 43.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 42-44.



as a body ; as the Body Which had been born of Mary, and had been nailed to the Cross.

And this leads me to notice a remark of a very interesting and accomplished writer, which it were better perhaps to leave unnoticed, unless attention had already been directed to it very prominently. He complains that Christ's Resurrection is understood by Christians in what he calls a "carnal" sense ; he asks how a "carnal" resurrection could benefit us ; he holds that to be a good Christian it is enough to believe in what he calls Christ's spiritual Resurrection ; and he regrets that the Jews buried and did not burn their dead, for in the latter case, he thinks, the Christian idea of the Resurrection would have remained far more spiritual.<sup>1</sup>

Here we really have to do with a use of terms which is, to say the least, ambiguous. What do we generally mean by "carnal" ?

"Carnal" is a word which has acquired a bad sense from its association in St. Paul's writings with the idea of sin. The flesh, St. Paul teaches, is the seat of sin, and carnal is that which belongs to the flesh. Our author employs a word which has these damaging associations connected with it ; but what does he really mean by it ? Sin has no place in our Lord ; and our author means by a "carnal" resurrection simply a literal, matter-of-fact, real resurrection. And what does he mean by "spiritual" ? Not, I fear, even that which belongs to a spirit independent of that of the person who is thinking about the Resurrection. He means by spiritual something that presents itself attractively to the thinking mind, but has no certain place in the sphere of external facts. And if this is his meaning, then we must say unshrinkingly that a resurrection, to be real, must be carnal, in the sense of being "a resurrection of the flesh ;" if it is not, in this sense, carnal, it is no resurrection at all. A resurrection of a body, if it be real, is the restoration

<sup>1</sup> Max Müller, *Biographical Essays* (London, 1884), pp. 139, 140. "And as to Christ's real resurrection, is it credible that when we are told again and again that Christ came to bring life and immortality to light, the simple words that Christ rose from the dead should be taken in a carnal, not in a spiritual sense? How would a carnal resurrection and ascension benefit us? . . . Of this I am perfectly certain, that if you had said to Stanley, 'Am I a Christian if I believe only in the spiritual Resurrection of Christ?' he would have said, 'Yes, and all the more if you do not believe that His body was taken up to the clouds.' I often regret that the Jews buried, and did not burn their dead, for in that case the Christian idea of the Resurrection would have remained far more spiritual."

to life of the flesh which composes that body. It is not the presentation of something else, whether it be a spiritual essence, or a vital truth, or a conviction, or a hope in the minds of others. The substitution of anything else for the material of the body destroys the fact of a real resurrection; the word becomes misleading and dishonest. To call a resurrection spiritual, which is in fact no true resurrection at all, but only a particular effect upon the minds of certain living people, is to abuse the term "spiritual:" but our Lord for Himself repudiates the idea that His Resurrection was spiritual in any sense which excluded the quickening of His very flesh. "Handle Me, and see," cries the Risen Jesus, "for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." As for cremation, Christian reverence shrinks from discussing the cremation of our Lord's Sacred Body; but cremation, had it taken place, could have made no difference, except in the sphere of imagination. The resurrection of a body from its ashes is not a greater miracle than the resurrection of an unburnt body. Each must be purely miraculous, and there is no more to be said. Faith would have been as clear and strong if the former usage had prevailed in those ages and countries instead of the latter.

The truth, as we have seen, is that our Lord's Resurrection was, in the words of this writer, both carnal and spiritual. Carnal, because His Body, and nothing else that was substituted for it, actually rose; spiritual, in so far as His Body was endowed with new properties, which traversed and suspended the ordinary laws of matter.

## II.

Now, corresponding to the twofold character of our Lord's Risen Body, visible and palpable on the one hand, and spiritual on the other, is the character of the Religion which represents Him among men.

Religion is like a sacrament: it has its outward and visible signs and its inward fact, or thing signified. Of these, the latter is, beyond dispute, the more important. Religion, the bond between the soul and God, lives in the habits, or acts, whereby the soul adheres to, and communes with, the Infinite Source of life. It is made up of faith, hope, and love, pouring themselves forth at the feet of the Invisible King; it is by turns aspiration, worship, resolve; it expends itself in a thousand unheard, unuttered acts, whereby the human spirit holds

converse with its Creator. Sometimes it has its eye on the Divine Justice, and it is forthwith godly fear ; sometimes on the beauty and perfection of God, and it melts into love ; sometimes on the soul's manifold sins and ingratitude, and then it becomes shame and confusion ; sometimes on the promises of God's mercy in Jesus Christ, and then it is repentance, contrition, self-condemnation, resolutions to amend. Religion, as it beholds the transcendent Majesty of God, prompts the soul to a thousand acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving ; it summons the angels and the saints, and the whole world of sentient and even inanimate creatures to sympathy and co-operation in the work of praise ; it bids the soul offer all that it has and is to His service and His glory ; it congratulates Him that He is what He is, and rejoices that any other creatures exist to set forth His praise ; it desires that all may be brought to know and love Him ; it is full of zeal for the advancement of His kingdom, and the doing of His will. Above all, Religion is a humble and resigned temper, which sees in the ills of life the just reward of personal sin, and would take up the Cross, less from a sense of necessity, than from a sense of justice ; its inmost spirit is that of the Psalmist : "a broken and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."<sup>1</sup>

Religion is thus in its essence altogether removed from the province of sense ; we cannot feel, or see, or hear these acts of the soul, which assert its presence. It belongs to the purely immaterial world : it is hid with the Father, Who seeth in secret, and Who is worshipped, if at all, in spirit and truth.

On the other hand, Religion has another aspect. It steps forth from the sphere of the supersensuous, which is its congenial home ; it takes bodily form and mien, and challenges the senses of hearing, and sight, and touch. It appeals through the human voice to the ear of sense. It meets and fascinates the eye ; it even presents itself, as in the outward elements of a sacrament, to the touch. It is represented by a visible society,—the Church. This society has its ministers, its assemblies for worship, its characteristic rites, its public buildings—all of which fall within the province of sense. The visible Church is, as our Lord said, a city set on a hill, which cannot be hid.<sup>2</sup>

Again, Religion is represented by a book,—the Bible. The Bible, too, belongs to the world of sense, just as much as the Church. We see it, handle it, read it. It brings Religion

<sup>1</sup> Ps. li. 17.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. v. 14.

visibly into the area of history, of poetry, of philosophy, as embodied in a large ancient literature.

In the same way, Religion takes an outward shape in the good works and characters of individual Christians. They arrest observation; they invite comment, examination, discussion; they belong just as much to the public life of mankind as do the lives of worldly or wicked men. By them, too, Jesus Himself stands in the midst of human society.

In short, Religion in the world has this double character, outward and inward. Its organisation among men in a visible Church, its embodiment in a sacred literature, its exhibition in the productive lives of Christians, are the outward and visible signs of a world beyond, in which the convictions and motives to which it appeals have their sway and empire. It is easy enough to make too much of the outward and visible side of Religion. We may think so much of the visible portion of the Church as to forget that larger invisible portion of it which is beyond the veil. We may be so enamoured of the literary beauty of the Bible as to forget its real claims as the Handbook of Revelation, and the Handbook of Religion. We may be so delighted with the purely material side of Christian benevolence, with the long train of earthly blessings which a good man, who has the opportunity of doing so, leaves behind him, as he moves forward through life towards the goal of his career, as to forget that which is greater than anything material; that which is true in conviction, and lofty in character, and disinterested in motive; in short, all that really connects the servant of God with the invisible world.

But the palpable, material side of Religion is like the visible form of the Risen Jesus in the house of Zebedee; it is a warrant of the realities of the invisible. When the Ten gazed upon the open Wounds in the Hands and Feet of the Redeemer; when, in response to His unspeakable condescension, they handled Him, and knew from contact that He had indeed a Body of flesh and bones; they knew that, if a few hours, perhaps a few minutes later, He should have vanished from their sight, He would still be with them, although invisibly. When our eyes rest on the visible accessories of Religion, on its representation in a great society of human beings, on its splendid literature, on its representative efforts, on its temples and its worship, on its solemn rites and ordinances, on its whole machinery of action in a Christian country, let us reflect that these would not be here, unless there were a solemn truth

behind. If they belong to the world of sense, they witness to the supersensuous ; they assure us that Religion is no phantom, but has the flesh and bones of substance and reality.

### III.

Our Lord's precept, "handle Me, and see," is addressed to two different classes of men.

*a.* It is an encouragement for the timid. The Eleven were thoroughly frightened at the sudden appearance of the Risen Jesus : they were bidden draw near, handle Him and see if there was aught to terrify them. He did not always speak thus. When, in the early morning of that very day, the impulsive Magdalene, in her passionate and eager love, would have laid hold on Him, He checked her : "Touch Me not ; I am not yet ascended unto My Father."<sup>1</sup> This intimate contact is a privilege for the hesitating and the unassuming.

There are in every generation some men who are afraid to come near enough to Religion to do it justice. It inspires them with a certain curiosity, but with less curiosity than apprehension. There is something mysterious about its language, its services, its ministers, which attracts and yet repels them,—repels them sufficiently to prevent their investigating its claims. We all of us must have met in life men who look into a Bible now and then, enter a church now and then, engage in a religious conversation now and then ; but who on the whole are suspicious, distant, unwilling to commit themselves. They listen to a sermon ; and its phraseology, necessarily differing, as much of it does, from that in which we conduct the affairs of civil life, seems weird and strange to them. They are present in a church while the Holy Sacrament is being celebrated ; and the successive stages of the service, and the posture of the worshippers, and the mysterious acts of Consecration and Communion, seem to belong to an order of ideas which inspires apprehension, or at least awe, rather than love and confidence. To such our Lord says, "Handle Me, and see." The Sacrament of My Death, and the words of My Gospel, can only thus alarm you, while you keep at a distance from them. To come closer is to know that here is the flesh and bones, the warrants of the reality of

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 17.



a Religion which can satisfy the deepest needs of the soul of man.'

β. "Handle Me, and see." It is a direction for the perplexed. The Eleven could not reconcile the Presence of Jesus there in the midst of them with the fact that the doors were closed. How did He come there? Or was He there at all? were they looking on something that only resembled Him, although it resembled Him exactly? They did not know; they could only wonder.

There are many men who, if they were asked what is the leading characteristic of Religion, would answer, 'The perplexities which surround it.' To them it appears to be, beyond any other subject, uncertain. They do not reject, but neither do they admit, its claims. They pass weeks, months, years, in an attitude of indecision; and too often they end their lives by dying undecided. Religion is of course only of value to those who heartily accept its claims; and the question arises, Why do men of this kind thus forfeit its assistance and its blessings? It may be replied that Christendom is so divided that they do not know what to believe. Very well, let them begin by believing all the truths on which Christendom, with all its divisions, is agreed: to believe these truths, and act on the belief, will soon carry them further. May it not be that their perplexity is due, at least in part, to a want of serious purpose in examining the claims and substance of Religion at all? Who has not felt on an August day, when a wide landscape lies stretched out under the rays of a summer sun, how at first everything seems to be indistinct and blurred; and then, as the spectator steadily and intently gazes, outline and form gradually emerge from the haze; here appears a hill, there a wood, yonder a river, then a church tower, and a mansion, and the houses of the cottagers nestling among the trees? Five minutes ago all seemed misty and indefinite; only let the eye resolutely scan it, and the harmonies as well as the features of the prospect become clear, and all doubts as to its range, and beauty, and characteristics are at an end. In many cases—I do not say in all,—Religion is only perplexing because it is never examined closely; because men look at it only as a sort of by-play, in the spare moments of a busy life, and assume too hastily that it is unsubstantial, when its reality does not flash forth irresistibly upon their inert intelligence. They must handle it if they would see that it has the flesh and bones,



which distinguish a creed that has come from heaven from a creation of the fancy or of the fears of men.

And this may lead us to consider one practice in particular by which our Lord's command may be obeyed in its spirit and drift,—I mean, Meditation. The Bible says a great deal about meditation, that is, the fixing the mind steadily on some one religious truth or fact, with a view to extracting from it all the meaning and guidance that we possibly can.' Many Christians who say their prayers regularly never meditate. The very word seems to them rather to belong to religious phraseology, than to describe anything actual and practical in a Christian's life. Yet they little know how much they lose, especially with reference to the Life of our Lord and Saviour, by neglecting this most healthful and fruitful exercise. You say you do not know how to set about it. Very well, try something of this kind. After saying your morning prayers, open a New Testament, and ask God to enable you to realise His Presence, and to send His Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide you. Then read two or three verses, or a short paragraph, a miracle, a parable, a part of a discourse, as the case may be. Do not think of its grammatical, or historical, or literary aspects : but say, 'What do these words say to me? What truth do they teach? What fault do they correct? What effort do they prescribe or encourage? What resolutions do they make necessary?' If earnest, you will soon see your way. Scripture is so full of meanings that the real difficulty is which to select out of its abundance. Then, having decided on the main lessons of the passage, pray earnestly that you may practically remember them, and turn them in whatever way to the best account. The whole exercise need not take up more than ten minutes ; but at the end of a year, it will, if regularly practised, have made a great difference in matters which most intimately concern the soul. It is one way of so handling the Gospel History as to become convinced of its truth from perceiving its intimate sympathy with, and adaptation to, our own case. Instead of a vague, half-remembered, less than half-comprehended, story, the Life of Jesus, steadily meditated on, passes into the life of the Christian, by an insensible but real transfusion. It is turned *in succum et sanguinem*; into the very substance of all that is truest and deepest in thought and heart. It illuminates, it warms, it invigorates ; and by doing this it gives that inward proof of its own reality, which has been most highly prized by the most devoted servants of God. As

of old, so now it is true that the man is blessed whose delight is in the revealed law of the Lord, and who meditates in it day and night ; since he shall be like a tree, planted by the water-side, who will bring forth his fruit in due season ; his leaf also shall not wither, and look, whatsoever he doeth, it shall prosper.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. i. 2, 3.

## SERMON VIII.

### OUR LORD'S RESUMPTION OF LIFE.

ST. JOHN X. 18.

*I have power to take it again.*

OUR Lord is speaking of His Life, and of His power, or, more strictly, His authority over it. This authority to dispose of it includes the laying it down in death, and the taking it again by Resurrection. "No man," He says, "taketh My Life from Me ; but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Both in death and in Resurrection His Will is free, and all-powerful. He died when and as He willed to die ; "I lay My Life down of (or from) Myself." He rose when and as He willed to rise : His Life had not escaped beyond His control, because He had laid it down in death : "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

#### I.

In no other passage of the Gospels is the Majesty of our Lord's Divine Person more plainly revealed in His Words than here. "No man taketh My Life from Me : but I lay it down of Myself."

Could you or I make these words our own ? There is indeed much in life that we can control : but can we control our way of leaving it ? Death comes to us in an hour that we think not, in some place that we have never thought of, through some cause or agency which we have never anticipated. It finds us, not in command of the situation ; but passive, helpless, alas ! too possibly, unprepared. So far from laying our life down, we yield it up. It is wrung from us by the dreadful ravages of disease, or by the hand of violence, or by an

accident, as we call it, by a railway collision or by a street vehicle, which shatters the feeble physical frame, and dismisses the spirit to the judgment-hall of its Creator. No men of this century have wielded such power in Europe, at certain moments of their lives, as the first and the third Napoleon ; they little meant to die, the one at St. Helena, the other at Chislehurst. The late Bishop Wilberforce once said that he never entered a railway carriage without reflecting that he might never leave it alive. He was a fearless horseman. And he met his death, as all the world knows, by a fall from his horse, when riding it at a walking pace, and engaged in conversation with a friend.

Perhaps it occurs to some who hear me, that a man may, if he chooses to do so, lay down his life at pleasure. The old Stoics taught that when life had become, for whatever reason, unbearable, a wise man would leave it by an act of self-destruction. As a matter of physical possibility this, of course, is true. We can, if we will, break away from the moral control of our Creator, and rush all unprepared, or rather with an act of deadly sin upon our souls, into His awful Presence. Every day, indeed, the newspapers remind us that suicide is, physically speaking, only too possible : but what can be said of its morality ? Morally, it is at once cowardice and murder ; not the less cowardice because, possibly, as with Cato or Seneca, it is draped in a subtle personal pride ; not the less murder, because the murderer is also the victim.

Certainly a good man may find himself in circumstances in which it is a moral duty knowingly to face or accept death at the hands of others. The heathen knew that a man can sometimes only live at the cost of the true reasons which justify life. So it has been with great patriots in all ages of the world. So it has been with thousands of martyrs whose names are dear to the Christian Church. These men had moral power to lay down their lives. But they could not control the circumstances which made death a duty. If our Lord lays down His Life, His act differs from that of the suicide in its moral elevation ; it differs from that of the martyr in His command of the situation. As the Good Shepherd, He gives His Life for the sheep ;<sup>1</sup> it is in this character that He is speaking. As the Lord of life, He speaks of His own Human Life as His creature. It falls as entirely under the control of His Sovereign and Creative Will as does the life of every human

<sup>1</sup> St. John x. 11.

being under the Will of God. When God recalls or cancels a life to which He has given existence, we know that He is doing what He wills with His own. "Hath not the potter power over the clay?"<sup>1</sup> And when our Lord appoints the Human Body which He had made His Own to suffering and to death, He too is dealing with His Own Creature; though It was for ever united to Himself.

"I have power to take it again." Here our Lord's Majesty is much more apparent than in the former part of the sentence. For here He speaks as having a control over His Life, which no mere man can possibly, in any circumstances, pretend to have. We know that when soul and body are sundered by death, the body is resolved into its original elements. And there is in the soul no such force as can reconstitute the body, or make it again the dwelling-place and instrument of the soul. Scripture tells us that in certain cases life has been recalled to bodies from which it had fled; as to the widow's son whom Elisha raised,<sup>2</sup> and the dead man who touched the bones of Elisha,<sup>3</sup> and the daughter of Jairus,<sup>4</sup> and the son of the widow of Nain,<sup>5</sup> and, above all, Lazarus.<sup>6</sup> But in all these cases the restoration to life was effected, not from within, but from without. God put forth His creative or re-creative power, through some human agency, or, as in the case of our Lord's miracles, directly: and that which poor stricken humanity, lying in the strong and humiliating grasp of death, could never do for itself, was done for it by the Power to Whom nature owes its being, and Whom it must obey.

Here, I say, barbarism and civilisation, the ancient and the modern world, are on a level. Our science has no doubt done wonders: it has brought first one and then another of the powers of nature under man's control. But no man of science cherishes even a distant hope that it is reserved for him to startle the world by undoing the work of death, or even by keeping death indefinitely at bay. When you and I lie down to die, our bodies and spirits will be parted asunder; but, most assuredly, not at our discretion. And then will succeed a period during which the spirit, conscious of its separate life, remembering its past life, capable as before of all that is implied in intelligence and resolve, may survey, we know not how closely, as from another sphere of being, the gradual decay of its old and intimate companion, the body. But, for all purposes

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 21.<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings iv. 32-35.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xiii. 20, 21.<sup>4</sup> St. Luke viii. 49-55.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. vii. 11-15.<sup>6</sup> St. John xi. 38-44.

of reconstructing the body's life, the living spirit will be as powerless as the decaying body itself. Death can only be conquered by One Who, if He belongs to the human family, also transcends it, and Who has, it may be said, an independent and higher position outside it, which gives Him the necessary leverage for His work. And this it is which lies in our Lord's Words, and which was realised at His Resurrection. When He claims to take His Life again, He stands in a relation towards His Life, which is inconceivable in any mere man; which is only intelligible if we believe Him to be personally the Everlasting Son of God. For Him, it is plain His Human Life is not a necessary condition of activity, but something to be acted on, disposed of, controlled. He speaks of it as we might speak of a dress, or of a social position which may be laid aside and then resumed at will. That which invests our Lord's Resurrection with its distinctive glory is the fact that He raised Himself from the dead by His Own Will and act.

## II.

There is indeed another aspect of the Resurrection which is more often brought before us in Holy Scripture. Our Lord is said to have been raised up by God the Father. This was St. Peter's language in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost,<sup>1</sup> and when addressing the people, after the miracle at the Beautiful gate of the Temple.<sup>2</sup> This was the expression he employed, when defending himself before the Sanhedrin, both on the first<sup>3</sup> and second<sup>4</sup> occasion of his appearing before it. This is the phrase which is used in St. Peter's address to Cornelius,<sup>5</sup> and not less than four times in St. Paul's sermon in the synagogue at Antioch in Pisidia.<sup>6</sup> It is indeed St. Paul's common way of referring to the Resurrection: he is wont to speak of the Resurrection as the work of God the Father. So it is in the first epistle that he ever wrote; that to the Thessalonians.<sup>7</sup> So it is in the last, his second letter to Timothy.<sup>8</sup> So it is in each of the four letters which mark the most active period of his life; those to the Romans,<sup>9</sup> the Galatians,<sup>10</sup> the two to the Corinthians.<sup>11</sup> So it is in two out of the four epistles written in his first imprisonment; <sup>12</sup> although he also sometimes refers

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iii. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. iv. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. v. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. x. 40.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xiii. 30, 33, 34, 37.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Thess. i. 10.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 8.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. iv. 24, 25; vi. 4; viii. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Gal. i. 1.

<sup>11</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 15; 2 Cor. iv. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Eph. i. 20; Col. ii. 12.



to the Resurrection, without reference to the agency by which it was effected.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, on two occasions when our Lord is reported by the second<sup>2</sup> and third<sup>3</sup> Evangelists to have predicted His Resurrection, he speaks of it as of an act distinctly His Own. And in like manner, He had, during an earlier visit to Jerusalem, used the momentous words, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up."<sup>4</sup> The Jews understood Him to be speaking of the building on which they were looking. But the Evangelist explains that He meant the Temple of His Body; and this expression implies that the act of rising was His Own no less than His saying, "I have power to take My Life again."

There is here, at first sight, a contradiction; but only at first sight. The Resurrection does not cease to be our Lord's act, because it is also the act of the Father. When God acts through mere men, He makes them His instruments; their acts are His. He saves Israel by Moses. He conquers Canaan by Joshua. There is no contrast between His mighty arm and the agent whom He employs; the result is variously ascribed to the agent or to the Employer. This is not indeed strictly analogous to, but it enables us to understand, the case before us. Our Lord raised Himself from the dead, because, "as the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son to have life in Himself:"<sup>5</sup> the Power which immediately effected the Resurrection is as old as the Eternal Generation of the Son. But it is also the Father's Power, since from Him it is thus eternally derived. And so far from there being any opposition between the two, the one necessarily implies the other, in virtue of the Unity, not merely of Will, but of Essence, between the Everlasting Father and the Everlasting Son. If we believe our Lord when He says, "I and My Father are One,"<sup>6</sup> we see no difficulty in being told that Christ was raised from the dead by the Father, while yet He Himself refers to His Resurrection as to an act strictly His Own.

It is important to remember this on Easter Day, as showing the true character of our Lord's Resurrection. His Resurrection was His Own act. He rose from the dead, as He spoke, or ate, or walked, or sat down; because He willed to do so.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 9; vii. 4; 1 Cor. xv. 20, etc.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xviii. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. v. 26.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark x. 34

<sup>4</sup> St. John ii. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. x. 30.

There must have been a moment, which imagination under the conduct of Christian faith endeavours, but in vain, adequately to realise, when the Human Soul of our Lord, surrounded by myriads of angels, on His return from the home of the ancient dead, came to the grave of Joseph of Arimathæa to claim the Body That had hung upon the Cross. Sure we may be that the highest intelligences of heaven bent low in adoration, when the Soul of Jesus

Paused at the Body's wounded side,  
Bright flashed the cave, and upward rose  
The living Jesus glorified.

Such a moment there was, in the history of this our world, when our Lord asserted His power over death; and Easter is indeed poorly kept, if we fail to bear in mind what must have been the most original and overwhelming incident of the mystery which it commemorates.

### III.

Of the considerations which our Lord's Self-resurrection suggests, let us content ourselves with three.

We are reminded, first of all, of what Christianity really and truly means. It does not mean mere loyalty to the precepts of a dead teacher, or admiration of a striking and unworldly character that lived upon this earth eighteen centuries ago. True Christianity is something more than literary taste; it is more than a department of moral archæology.

It is, before all things, devotion to a living Christ; to a Christ Who lives now as energetically as on the morning of the Resurrection; to a Christ Who proved His indestructible vitality by raising Himself from the dead. If Christianity were a false religion, literary men might still endeavour to reconstruct the history of its earliest age by their profound researches, their vivid descriptions, their cultivated historical imagination, their artistic word-painting. This is what is done with the great teachers of pagan antiquity; with Socrates, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, not less than with Him Who is the subject of the Gospels. But there is this difference. What the great heathens were is all that we can hope to know in this life. What they are, and where, we cannot know. Somewhere indeed their spirits are in God's universe,

waiting for the last award ; but assuredly not more capable of helping others, not themselves less helpless and incapable, than the millions who have admired their acts or their sayings since they departed hence. But how utterly different is the case with Christ our Lord ! He Who could, at will, resume the life, which He had willed to lay down, is not thus powerless among the spirits of the dead : and as faith listens, she hears His Voice sounding from the depths of the Eternal World, " I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore ; and have the keys of hell and of death."<sup>1</sup> In the fulness of that living and indestructible power which He asserted by His Resurrection, He still rules and holds communion with His Church, and with every living member of it. And our relation to Him, so far from being that of mere students towards an ancient literature, is really that of members of a great family, living in intimate association with an unseen but watchful and most tender Parent, Whose power to aid is never doubtful to those who remember that on Easter morning He raised His Own Body from the grave.

Do not mistake me. Literature has done, and may yet do, great service to Christianity, by investigating and exhibiting its early history. But a literary Christianity is one thing, and a living Christianity is another. A living Christianity means a living Christ. And unless, in our acts, and words, and thoughts, we have renounced the fatal mistake of treating Him as merely the subject of an ancient literature, while forgetting that He is at this moment just as much alive, and just as present, and very much more aware of all that is going on around and within us than the person who sits next to each one of us on the floor of this Cathedral, we have not learnt the very first lesson of Easter Day.

Next, we see here the foundation of our confidence in the future of Christianity. Based as it is on a Risen Christ, on a Christ Who raised Himself from death, it cannot pass away. Great teachers there have been, upon whom mankind has lavished the enthusiasm of a passionate admiration ; but they have died and been forgotten. The age in which they lived, perhaps, proclaimed that the dust of their writings was gold : a succeeding age scarcely opens their folios. Why are we Christians certain that this fate does not await the Great Teacher Whom we worship ? Because men's loyalty to Him rests from

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 18.

age to age, not mainly on His Words, not even on His example, but on His Person. "Christ," it has been finely and profoundly said, "is Christianity ;" not Christ's Words, not Christ's example, but Christ. And why is it that in thus clinging to His Person, Christian faith is so sure of the future ? Why is it that faith is undismayed in days of declension, darkness, weakness, division, apparently hopeless failure and collapse ? Because she has before her not a Christ who was conquered by death, not a Christ whose spirit was dismissed to find a place somewhere near Plato or Confucius, while his corpse rotted in a rocky grave beneath the Syrian sky, but a Christ Who, when to the eye of sense He seemed to have succumbed to the agencies which drag or thrust us to the tomb, suddenly, as a Psalmist says of God in providence, "awaked as one out of sleep, and as a giant refreshed with wine, and smote His enemies,"<sup>1</sup> sin, death, hell, "on the hinder parts, and put them to a perpetual shame." Of that decisive victory the effects are not transient ; since He Who then rose from the sleep of death dies no more.

Had it been otherwise Christianity might well have perished, more than once. It might have died outright of the public and astonishing wickedness of the Roman Court in the tenth century. It might have been crushed out of being by the hordes of Islam in the first flush of their conquests, or by the great Turkish Sultans of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It might have sunk beneath the accumulated weight of corruption which invited the Reformation : it might have disappeared amidst the Babel of self-contradicting voices which the Reformation itself produced. At one time it has been threatened with death, by the relation of the Church to corrupt or absolute governments ; at another by the rash levity or by the dishonest enterprises of speculative and unbelieving theologians. Men said that the Church was killed, under Decius and Diocletian : they said so again, with greater confidence, after the literary blasphemies and moral outrages of the first French Revolution. But, practically, each reverse, each collapse, each period of sickness and decline, is followed by revival, reinvigoration, victory. Why is this, but because Christ is incarnate in Christendom ; and Christendom reproduces in its history His momentous Words ? Again and again in history He might seem to lay down His Life, and lo ! presently He takes it again ; the heaviness of His people may endure for a night, but joy

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxviii. 65.

cometh in the morning. For He is there Who died on Good Friday, and lay in the grave on Easter Eve and rose, when He willed to rise on Easter morning, as Master of the Life which for His Own high purposes He thus could lay aside and thus resume.

Once more, Easter is one of the days on which the dead must have a great place in the thoughts and prayers of Christians. Of every anniversary, to a certain extent, this holds good. Each birthday recalls those who shared it with us last year, or in years that preceded it, and who are no longer on earth. Each family gathering reminds us by its gaps that of those who are nearest to us by blood, some are no longer present in the flesh, but have passed into that sphere of being which awaits us all. And public holidays and Church holidays have the same mournful reflections inevitably attached to them; we cannot help thinking of any who was here one or five or ten years since, and who is here no longer. Easter Day, the queen of festivals, brings with it this sad and piercing thought, but it also brings with it a consolation which no serious Christian will miss. They have passed away—those whom we have known and loved, it may be, better than any who yet remain,—they have passed into the world of disembodied spirits; they are waiting, unchanged in all that belongs to essential character, with that simplicity, that disinterestedness, that affectionateness, that generosity, that lofty and intrepid purpose, that lowly and penetrating sympathy which won our hearts while they were still on earth. They are waiting, in a scene which we cannot even imagine, but which we shall one day gaze upon; until another change shall restore them to the completeness of their past selves. And of the reality of this change, Easter is the guarantee. He Who could, at will, resume the Life which He had laid down upon the Cross, can surely quicken at pleasure the bodies which have mingled with the dust; He can reunite them to the spirits, with which they were joined from the earliest moments of life. He Who could achieve the greater can achieve the less. We cease to marvel at His raising Lazarus, when we remember that He raised Himself.

It is this conviction which makes life to a believing Christian so entirely different a thing from that which it is to a man who has never shared or who has lost a Christian's faith. The world has been reading the papers in which that distinguished man of letters, the late Mr. Carlyle, has left on record his



thoughts and feelings about several of his contemporaries, and especially those members of his family who had a first place in his affections. Those papers are marked by all the writer's undisputed originality: and they have naturally aroused a degree of interest that is seldom commanded by any publication of the kind. It is instructive to listen to the comments that they provoke, and to the points in them which are selected as specially worthy of attention. One man dwells on the writer's power of vividly hitting off character, by a few decisive touches, such as might befit a print of Dürer's. Another insists, and with great justice, upon the revelations which they contain of a very tender heart; of a filial piety which is none too common in our day, and which is always beautiful. Another complains of the harsh, bitter, unwarranted judgments which disfigure them, and which are said, perhaps with reason, to be at variance with the language used by the writer at other times and in other circumstances. A fourth calls attention to the simplicity, which is here, as always, a note of strength; or to the stern independence, or to the pathetic self-reproach, which are again and again noticeable in these pages. But for us Christians, there is, it seems to me, a lesson in them which is more painfully and unfortunately interesting than any other. It is the bearing of this remarkable and gifted man in the presence of death. Carlyle does not here tell us why he had renounced the Christian beliefs in which he had been brought up: and we may well hope that his responsibility in this grave matter is less than it would have been, if as a boy he had learnt the faith of St. Paul and St. John undisfigured by the mistaken traditions of his northern home. However this may be, we see him in these pages face to face with those great sorrows which sooner or later await us all. And he shows us how little even genius avails, at these crises of our lives, to afford the peace and strength which faith only can command. None surely can mark the deeply troubled phrases,—echoes of a suppressed wail of agony that again and again finds vent in words,—when the writer thinks of a scene in the chamber of death as really the last scene of all, without bitterly regretting that a mind, in many ways so noble and so true, should have forfeited the great consolations which are the right of every believer in a Risen, or rather a Self-raised, Christ.

Faith forbids us Christians thus to sorrow, as those who have no hope, for them that sleep in Him. "For if we believe



that Jesus died, and rose again, even them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”<sup>1</sup>

“I have power to take My Life again.” May God teach each one of us something of the meaning of these Words of our Lord Jesus Christ on this His Resurrection Festival, to the greater glory of Him our Redeemer, and to our own endless peace !

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14.

## SERMON IX.

### THE POWER OF RECOVERY.

PSALM CXVIII. 17.

*I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.*

THIS buoyant and hopeful language is obviously in place on Easter Day. The Psalm which contains it has just been sung ; we have been placing ourselves among the Jews just restored to their homes after the Babylonish Captivity. It was sung for the first time either at laying the foundation-stone of the new Temple, or at its dedication : and it breathes, in every line, the spirit of thankfulness, of triumph, of hope. It is the Hymn of the Deliverance from the Captivity, just as Miriam's song is the Hymn of Deliverance from Egypt :<sup>1</sup> it is such a *Te Deum* as was possible when as yet the Gospel had not been revealed.

The situation is implied rather than described. Heathendom has done its worst ; but Israel has triumphed. The heathen had compassed Israel about "like bees,"<sup>2</sup> in countless, thronging numbers ; they had "thrust sore"<sup>3</sup> at Israel : but "the voice of joy and salvation was now heard in the dwellings of the righteous :"<sup>4</sup> the "right hand of the Lord had brought mighty things to pass."<sup>5</sup> The bondage of seventy years is over : God has "broken the gates of brass, and smitten the bars of iron in sunder :"<sup>6</sup> the perils of the desert have been safely traversed ; and Israel is again in the home which, it had seemed, had been left for ever. And the people are keeping high festival : the day itself is consecrated. The Temple gates are bidden open before the advancing procession ; the "gates of righteousness," as they are called, must open, for they lead

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xv. 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. cxviii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. cvii 16.

the way to the altar of the All-Holy. And then as the throng passes within, the Psalmist notes a circumstance which forms a leading feature in his poem. In building the new Temple, some block of stone had been, at first, laid aside as useless, and then, on fuller consideration, it had been lifted up to fill one of the most important positions in the structure.<sup>1</sup> In the Psalmist's eyes, this was a parable, setting forth the recent history of the Jewish people. That people had seemed, 'as it went into its exile, to be laid aside as no longer of any account in the work of building up the moral and religious future of the world : it had had its day ; and it was forgotten. But lo ! in the hands of the Great Builder of the temple of human history, there is a sudden shifting and readjustment of the materials of empire ; Babylon itself dissolves in ruins ; Persia becomes mistress of the East : and the nation which was but now cast aside as worthless by Nebuchadnezzar, is honourably replaced in its ancient and consecrated home by Cyrus. And thus the stone which the human builders of the world's politics rejected, the same is made the head of the corner : only no merely human foresight could have foreseen, no merely human power could have compassed such result : "This is the Lord's doing, and it was marvellous in the eyes" of His servants.<sup>2</sup> Nor is this all. Still around the restored people were hovering many and implacable enemies ; the old vindictive animosities which, in "the day of Jerusalem,"<sup>3</sup> had hailed with delight the Babylonian triumph, were irritated into new life by the spectacle of the Restoration ; Edom, Ammon, Moab, the Arabian tribes, threatened mischief, if only and whenever they might have opportunity. But the Psalmist, impersonating the restored nation, is hopeful—nay, confident. The recent deliverance was itself the warrant of triumphs to come. Let Israel only be true to its high destiny, and He Who had done so much for His people will not leave them a prey to the enemies around : "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

And indeed this confidence stood the Jewish people in good stead. It carried them through the vicissitudes of the Persian rule, through the cruel oppressions of Antiochus Epiphanes, through the troubled days of the Herodian dynasty. It was only forfeited when they virtually rejected its true ground and basis ; when they broke, as St. Paul showed them,<sup>4</sup> with all the antecedents of their history, by rejecting that Son of David,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii. 22.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid. 23.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid. cxxxvii. 7.    <sup>4</sup> Acts xiii. 16-41.

Who was also David's Lord, and in leading up to Whom Israel had fulfilled its appointed destiny.

Thus we have in the words, and indeed throughout the Psalm, a buoyant sense of recovered power, which looks hopefully forward into the uncertain future. And of this the secret is a quickened conviction of the Presence of God among His people. Just as some two centuries earlier, when Sennacherib was threatening Jerusalem, a Psalmist had sung that "God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed : God shall help her, and that right early ;"<sup>1</sup> so now the warrant of confidence is the same, "The Lord is on my side : I will not fear what flesh can do unto me."<sup>2</sup> The Psalm passes from stanza to stanza in an ever-swelling volume of thankful hope : "The Lord is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation."<sup>3</sup> "The Lord hath chastened and corrected me : but He hath not given me over unto death."<sup>4</sup> "This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it."<sup>5</sup> "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

# I.

Had this however been all that there is to be said about the words before us, it would have been better to have gone elsewhere for an Easter text. What did these words mean in the Mouth of our Lord Jesus Christ ? It may be said at once, and confidently, that He made the words His Own. During His earthly Life, the Book of Psalms was His Prayer-book. And those Psalms, we may be sure, which were believed to refer to the promised Messiah, were often in His Heart and on His Lips. To Him the immediate historical reference was less than the deeper although secondary sense of the words : He knew the meaning of His Own Spirit better than did the Psalmist whom His Spirit had inspired. So He ignores the reference to the rejected and restored people : He is, Himself, the corner-stone. Had not Isaiah said that Israel's Saviour was to be "despised and rejected of men,"<sup>6</sup> before the hour of triumph came when He should "divide the spoil with the strong" ?<sup>7</sup> and was not this fulfilled accurately in the earthly Life of Jesus ? And therefore when, four days before His Passion, He had uttered in the Temple that solemn parable of the husbandmen, who after beating and killing and stoning their Master's servants,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlv. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. cxviii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 18.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>6</sup> Isa. liii. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 12.

end by slaying the son, and casting him out of the vineyard,<sup>1</sup> He desired to bring the reality sharply home to the consciences of His hearers, and at the same time to announce the certain but unsuspected issue of all that they were then meditating. Therefore He suddenly asked them, "Did ye never read in the scriptures, The Stone Which the builders rejected, the same is become the Head of the corner?"<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see what was the meaning of this Psalm as used by our Lord. The Cross and grave have taken the place of the Babylonian bondage; the Restoration to Palestine is forgotten in the Resurrection. This single verse throws light on all the rest; and we cannot doubt what our Lord meant by saying, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Before His Crucifixion the words were a prophecy of the Resurrection. Unlike ourselves, our Lord throughout His earthly Life knew what was before Him. From us the future is hidden in merey: we could not bear the sight, it may be, if the veil were lifted. But our Lord surveyed everything. He contemplated each detail of the Passion for years before it was undergone; and of course He accentuated and extended His sufferings by the contemplation. The motto of this period of His Life was, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"<sup>3</sup> And yet the foreknowledge which surveyed His coming agony surveyed also the peace and triumph beyond. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished. For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again."<sup>4</sup> He was to die, yet He was to rise; it was the prospect of death modified by the prospect of triumph over death; it was Calvary, but already irradiated by the Resurrection morning. "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." But after the Resurrection the words must have a fuller meaning; they became to Him more literally true. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."<sup>5</sup>

This is indeed the crowning glory of the Easter Victory: it is final. The sorrow of Gethsemane, the humiliations of the judgment-hall, the lingering torture on Calvary, are passed for ever: they never can be renewed. "For in that He died, He

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt xxi. 39

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 42.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xii. 50.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xviii. 31-33.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. vi. 9.

died unto sin once ; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.”<sup>1</sup> We have heard of victories which are no sooner achieved than other victories become necessary in order to secure their advantages. But when Jesus rose from His grave on Easter Day, the sting of death was extracted, and the power of the grave conquered, once for all. “I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.”<sup>2</sup> Henceforth He will declare the works of the Lord. For forty days He will hold converse with His Apostles as to the things concerning the kingdom of God. And then He will send the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, “to take of” what He had already taught in parable or epigram, and “show it to” His Church, in its full significance of creed and doctrine.<sup>3</sup> And His envoys, speaking in His Name, and as His mouth-pieces, shall “go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,”<sup>4</sup> even to the end of time.

Yes ! He is living now. We do not see Him : He has withdrawn Himself beyond the veil ; but tokens are not wanting which go to show that He is within hearing, that He watches and shapes the course of the world, and the destinies of His Church, and the lives of His servants. He has a better reason for His confidence than had Israel after the Restoration. The Presence of God in Israel was liable to forfeiture by disloyalty ; it was, as we know, forfeited in the sequel of events. In our Lord and Saviour this Presence is linked to His Manhood, by a union, personal and indissoluble. He speaks as Man, for ever united with Deity ; and His sense of possessing an imperishable life becomes, when deposited in the heart of His Church, a power of recovery and survival which yields a new meaning to the words that may well engage our attention.

## II.

“I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”

We listen here to an utterance of the heart of the Christian Church, again and again heard during the centuries of her eventful history. In many ways the Passion and Resurrection of Christ have been reflected in the later fortunes of Christianity ; and especially the Church’s power of recovery from weakness and disaster is a note and proof of her union with Christ. This her vital and recuperative energy is His

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 10.    <sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 18.    <sup>3</sup> St. John xvi. 15.    <sup>4</sup> St. Mark xvi. 15.



Who "was crucified through weakness, yet liveth by the power of God."<sup>1</sup>

In three ways, the Church of Christ has been, from time to time, brought down, to all appearance, to the chambers of the dead, and from this deep depression she has risen again to newness of life.

First, there has been the distress and suffering produced by outward persecution. For nearly three hundred years the imperial government of Rome was engaged in an almost uninterrupted attempt to stamp out the Church by physical force. No forms of torture were unemployed in order to expel religious conviction from the souls of Christians. Old men and maidens, young men and children, gave their witness, on scaffolds, in amphitheatres, in deserts, on mountain-sides, to the Name of Jesus. One emperor failed in the enterprise; but another took up the task. After Nero came Domitian, after Decius, Diocletian. At last the arms of the old empire became enfeebled by age; and the wild cries of the barbarians were heard more and more distinctly along a thousand miles of frontier; and paganism in its decay could persecute no more. Yet at times it had seemed that the Faith might be killed out from among men. It was natural to take this view of things, if men had no adequate idea of the forces and principles in conflict;—organised physical might on one side, and a Creed, resting only on unseen realities, on the other.

But all through these dark and dreary years, the secret leaven of the Resurrection power of Jesus was working in the heart of Christendom. Never was the darkness so thick that no ray of light reached the soul of the suffering Church. Never was her cause so desperate but that she could, not boastfully or in scorn, but in the clear, albeit broken accents of faith and hope, utter her unfailing conviction; "The empire will pass, but Jesus Christ remains; "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." "

Next, the Church has been exposed more than once to a more formidable danger,—the decay of vital convictions within her fold.

This happened in the early part of the thirteenth century, when the Arabian philosophers of Moorish Spain were so widely read in the Universities of Europe, and caused for some years a secret but profound unsettlement of faith in the leading

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 4.

truths of Christianity. So again, at the revival of letters in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, especially in Italy. So also, and conspicuously in the eighteenth century, we may almost say, throughout Europe. The great anti-Christian campaign was opened in England by Bolingbroke, Tindal, and the English Deists. It was carried on in France by their pupil—for such virtually he was—Voltaire, and the Encyclopædist writers. It found a powerful patron in Frederick the Great of Prussia. It closed, in Germany, with Lessing, who mistook criticism for faith, and to whom the search for truth seemed better than its possession; and with Nicolai, and other writers of the “enlightenment” period; while on the western bank of the Rhine, the worship of the goddess of Reason was keeping time with the horrors of the Revolutionary Tribunal and of the Reign of Terror. “I am tired,” Voltaire once said, “of hearing that it took only twelve men to set up Christianity in the world; I will show that it needs but one man to destroy it.” There were Christians to whom it seemed that Christianity had had its day; that God must have withdrawn His protective survey from the world of human thought; and that all the waves and storms of insurrectionary blasphemy were at last burying out of sight and for ever the Gospel of Christ. But that age was also the age of not a few saintly Christians, both in England and elsewhere. And they were sure that the Faith and Church of Christ had not forfeited the power of recovery which is lodged in them by Christ’s Resurrection. Years passed, and men who were not religious came to see that, whatever were Voltaire’s powers in other directions, his shallow scornful treatment of the Bible resembled the art of the schoolboy who earns the cheap laughter of his fellows by painting a moustache on a fine antique, and running away. Years passed, and theories which were merely negative, and had no substantial truth or help to give whereby minds might be illuminated and wills invigorated, and souls refreshed, were seen in their real poverty and nakedness. And thus men turned their eyes back to the creed of their forefathers and to the spiritual mother that had blessed them in their infancy. But all through that dreary century, in the heart of the Church was repeated the profound unsundered conviction: ‘These writers may say what they will: and yet “I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.”’

Once more, and worst of all, the Church has been exposed to moral corruption. So it was, we know, within certain limits, under the eyes of the Apostle himself at Corinth. So it was in the tenth century, when the highest places in the hierarchy were controlled by the unhappy Theodora and Marozia.<sup>1</sup> We need not multiply illustrations; but here surely is an evil more perilous far than any persecutor's sword, or even than any form of intellectual rebellion. And yet in times like these, however grave has been the scandal, or deep-seated the disease, the heart of the Church has remained sound. The thousands or millions of simple folk, who have been true, on the whole, to the light which God has given them, true to their faith in a Crucified Redeemer, and a sanctifying Spirit, and the claims of conscience, and the imminence of a world beyond the grave,—these have been the real soul of the Church, the root from which new saplings and shoots would spring. And in their life of faith and hope, whatever might be the load of distress and discouragement, there has reigned all along the profound conviction that the faith and life of Christendom would not perish; that the Church still might say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord."

Good men always feel strongly the evils of their own day; it is their business to recognise and to combat them. But in doing so they are sometimes led to think that no previous age has been so weighted with energetic mischief as their own. Here there is a risk of losing a true sense of proportion; of not merely exaggerating the evils of present as compared with those of past times, but of forgetting the Divine resources upon which the Church of Christ may always fall back, and which are more than equal to her needs. Let us be sure that to believe that Christ has risen is to know that, come what may, His Church will not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.

### III.

But, once more, in these words we have the true language of the individual Christian soul, whether in recovery from illness, or face to face with death.

And, first, this is the language of the convalescent.

<sup>1</sup> Milman, *Lat. Christ.* ii. 451, Bk. v. c. 11.

Most of us who have reached middle life have seen some one in an extreme stage of illness. The patient has been given up. The doctors say that the case is hopeless. The relations are making up their minds to the separation, the wretch, the sorrow, the blank, the many forms of trouble that lie before them. It is said to be a question, at most, of days, perhaps only of hours. The sufferer cannot move, cannot speak, rarely opens his eyes, is supposed to be insensible to all that is passing. Perhaps he is keenly alive to every word that is said; but he thinks of himself as despondingly as do others. Hezekiah has described his thoughts in like circumstances:—

“I said, in the cutting off of my days,  
I shall go to the gates of the grave:  
I am deprived of the residue of my years.

Mine age is departed,  
And is removed from me as a shepherd's tent:  
I have cut off like a weaver my life:  
He will cut me off with pining sickness:  
From day even to night wilt Thou make an end of me.”<sup>1</sup>

All seems to be virtually over: and yet—the end does not come. Why this pause before the gates of death? Why this delay, when it needs but a convulsion, or a sigh, and all will have ended? Surely there is something more than hesitation to die; there is a faint sense of increased vitality; there is a surmise, which becomes a hope, a hope which becomes a conviction, that recovery is possible. At last the sufferer murmurs, “I shall not die, but live.”

It is a wonderful experience—this resumption of that which had been so solemnly taken leave of; this recovery of a sense of power and possession, when, as it seemed, all had been for ever resigned. One by one they come back,—the use of each deadened sense; the power to wield each languid limb; the free and buoyant exercise of first this and then that faculty of the mind which had sympathised so deeply with the weakness of the failing body. “I remember,” says one,<sup>2</sup> not long since taken from us, who when ill was wont to pass the hours of weariness and pain in repeating the Hebrew Psalms, “I remember how, in recovering from an illness, I could just say, ‘Thou shalt purge me with hyssop.’”<sup>3</sup> I could not possibly

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxviii. 10, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. E. B. Pusey, D.D., who described this experience to the author.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. li. 7.

recall the next words. A day later, 'and I shall be clean' flashed on me. Then I knew that I was better."

Convalescence! it is like a renewal of youth, when its strength is developed and its freshness has not yet passed. It is like a bright day in October re-animating, in the gloom of the falling year, the sense of recovered sunshine and life which belongs to spring. Convalescence! yes, it soon passes; its first vigour and freshness die away into the experiences of average life; but, meanwhile, what has it done for us? Is it nothing, think you, to have been thus face to face with death, to have surveyed from this Pisgah the plains of the land of promise; to have touched the very gate of the grave, and felt the powers of the world to come playing around us; to have had experiences which come to most men only once—when they have set out on that journey from which none return? Is it nothing to have been the object of those anxieties, those forebodings, those watchings, those prayers; to have been taken leave of by friends on earth; to have been waited for perhaps by evil spirits, perhaps by the blessed intelligences in Paradise? The legend that the risen Lazarus was never seen to smile expresses the sense of mankind as to what beseems him who has passed the threshold of the other world; and surely a new and peculiar seriousness is due from those who have all but passed it, and have returned to life by little less than a resurrection. Of what remains of life the motto should surely be, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord." Surely such a life must be consecrated; it is not thus paradoxically restored that it may forthwith be wasted; it must, by word and deed, by precept and example, be a living exposition of the Unseen; like the Risen Jesus, and in virtue of His Resurrection power, it must declare the works of the Lord.

But further, these words should express the feeling of every Christian soul, in the prospect of death and eternity.

We all of us have to die. There are many contingencies in life: but death is not a contingency. Everything indeed relating to it is uncertain; its date, its manner, its attendant circumstances. But death itself is, in the case of every human being, a certainty. It is appointed unto all men once to die.<sup>1</sup> But there are two very different estimates of death. Is it the

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ix. 27.



end of all things to us? Or is it a passing experience, an episode, in a vastly extended, nay, unending existence?

Nothing is more pathetic than the study of efforts which for thousands of years the human mind has made to answer this question; straining thought and fancy, and often what it believed to be experience, if only it might see the outline of that land which lies beyond the grave. Certainly it is impossible to read the dialogues in which great heathens, like Plato in one age and Cicero in another, endeavoured to satisfy themselves of the spirituality and survival of the soul, without sympathy and admiration for their anxious reaching after higher truth, their cautious, reverent, although at times necessarily mistaken endeavour to grasp the realities which are so familiar to Christians. For them immortality was a guess, rising, according to the temper of different minds, upwards towards certainty; they hoped rather than knew that the immaterial principle in man would survive the grave. Something more is needed to enable Christians to say, as we do, each of us, say, if we are Christians indeed, 'When my body is laid in the dust, I shall not die; my true self, my personal being, will live, and, through Christ's grace, will declare His redeeming work to all eternity.'

Jesus Christ our Lord has brought life and immortality to light.<sup>1</sup> Again and again He has in words taught us that there is a life beyond the grave; as when He says, "He that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."<sup>2</sup> But He has done more: He has made recovery from death even of the body palpable to the senses. He has, by His Resurrection, transferred the question of man's future from the region of speculation to that of experience, from the invisible world to the world of sight and touch. It is not for us Christians to say, 'Man may survive death.' We should know that he will. It is not for us to say, 'Man may be reunited to the material form which has been so intimately associated here with his life of consciousness and resolve.' We should know that this reunion is a certainty. Jesus Christ surely has not risen that we should live on in the twilight of conjecture as to the destiny that awaits us. He has risen, for this end among others, that He may one day "change our vile body, that it be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."<sup>3</sup>

Do not let us confuse the fact of our survival after what we

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. i. 10.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. x. 39.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iii. 21.



call death with our consciousness of it. The fact is as independent of human consciousness as the sun in the heavens. The sun is there whether we recognise him or not. The supersensuous realities are what they are, whatever be our mental attitude towards them ; the world of fact does not dance attendance upon the petty, fitful, uncertain world of human thought. But what we think habitually on the subject is to each one of us a matter of the greatest moment, since our fitness for the inevitable future depends upon the preparation which is being made for it by our minds and hearts and wills in our present state of existence.

With thousands of men there is no speculative difficulty as to the future life. The real speculative difficulty would be to suppose that such a force as the human mind could possibly be extinguished by the dissolution of the human body. And the resurrection of the human body is not more wonderful, because it is more unfamiliar, than its birth. But men who admit this still say, 'How am I to acquire, and carry about with me, and act upon, this practical conviction, this ever-present sense of the future that awaits me? How am I to turn a speculative conclusion into a persuasion that shall sway, and mould, and completely influence my life? How am I to learn, in this sense to say, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord"?'

The answer must be : Give your conviction a chance of growing. A conviction of a working kind depends less upon exact processes of the intellect than upon loyalty of the heart and will. If a man knows that a great earthly future is before him upon which he has not yet entered, he dwells on it in his leisure moments, and, though his life be a busy one, he makes time to prepare for it. If you would have the Christian sense of living for Eternity, allow time for it in your present life. We have spoken of Germany in the last century ; it offers few more interesting characters than Haller, the great naturalist, who made physiology a science. Haller was professor at Göttingen, but his reputation and his activity were European ; the Universities of Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg, Paris, Florence, Bologna, Padua, accounted it an honour to reckon him among their members ; not merely German princes, but the Emperor Joseph the Second eagerly sought his friendship. After his death a private diary was found, which shows how on every day in this busiest of lives, so constantly devoted to the scientific investigation of matter, time was made

for communion with the Unseen, and for meditation on the Future. "Enable me to think," these are his words, "in this still hour, on eternity, and prize at their true worth the poor joys of this fleeting life." "May I not only know, but feel, that, if I have not peace with Thee my God, I have nothing; and that the most enjoyable of such lives is but a sad dream, which eternity will end."<sup>1</sup>

If a man has a serious conviction, he makes ventures on the strength of it, and these ventures in return strengthen, deepen, broaden the conviction. Act as men who have Eternity before you, and you will soon have no doubts about its reality. Especially is the sense of the future world strengthened and deepened by our accompanying the dying, so far as we may, on their journey towards it. The poet of the *Christian Year* notes this effect of joining in Communion with the sick, in lines which are not easily forgotten, when once attention has been called to them:—

"O soothe us, haunt us, night and day,  
Ye gentle spirits far away,  
With whom we shared the cup of grace,  
Then parted;—ye to Christ's embrace,  
We to the lonesome world again—  
Yet mindful of the unearthly strain  
Practised with you at Eden's door,  
To be sung on, where angels soar,  
With blended voices, evermore."<sup>2</sup>

All this will seem easy and natural, if, in the Apostle's words, we have "risen with Christ." The sense of immortality will be enfeebled and die away, should we constantly live as though this world alone were real, and the other only a shadowy and distant uncertainty. But if, escaping from the grave of sense as well as the grave of sin, we retire like our Risen Lord from the sight of men, for communion with the Unseen; if, by His grace, we have the heart to turn away from the finite and the perishing to the Imperishable and the Infinite, we shall learn the lessons of eternity during the hours of time, and shall know as others cannot know, that, whenever or however death may await us, we shall not die, but live, and shall hereafter, as now, declare the works of the Lord.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Hagenbach's *Germ. Rationalism*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Christian Year: Visitation of the Sick*.

## SERMON X.

### THE LIVING NOT AMONG THE DEAD.

ST. LUKE XXIV. 5, 6.

*Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.*

THESE were the words of the two angels at the sepulchre to the Holy Women, who had gone very early in the morning of Easter Day, bringing spices to “anoint” the Body of Jesus. Greatly to their surprise they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. They entered in and found not the Body of the Lord Jesus. They were shocked at this: as they had made sure of finding Him; when suddenly, in their perplexity and distress, they found that they were not alone. Two men—St. John explains that they were two angels—stood beside them in shining garments. They were frightened at being so visibly close to beings who belonged to another world. They were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth; and then the angels addressed them in the words before us: “Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.”

We have here a gentle remonstrance, and the announcement of a fact. The fact is the certainty of the Resurrection: “He is not here, but is risen.” The remonstrance is, “Why seek ye the living among the dead?”

#### I.

The fact announced by the angel is, as we can see when we look back on it, among the best attested in human history. For forty days the Apostles continually saw Jesus Christ Risen; touched Him, spoke with Him, ate and drank with Him as before His death. They staked everything upon this fact. It was to them a fact of experience. They put it in the

forefront; they made it almost the staple of their teaching. They died—most of them—rather than disown their belief in it, and the larger faith which was based on it. St. Paul, writing some twenty-six years after the event, says that there were still alive more than two hundred and fifty people who had seen the Risen Jesus.

The experience of the Apostles and disciples is confirmed by the convictions of the eight thousand converts who were received into the Church of Christ by St. Peter, on preaching his two sermons, fifty days after the Resurrection. These converts were upon the spot where all had taken place: the event was much nearer to them in point of time than last Christmas is to us. They might have made any inquiries they liked; they might have cross-questioned the Apostolic witnesses; they might have examined the tomb; they might have asked the Roman guards to recall their exact impressions; they might have entered into the reasons which the Jews alleged for disbelieving the fact. And in a matter of such vital moment, when a change of religion was in question, when the new Christians might soon have to seal their convictions with their blood, they would naturally have done this. They would have made sure that they were not running serious risks for a baseless dream, that, in language of the day, they were not "following cunningly devised fables."<sup>1</sup>

It is said, I know, that the critical faculty in those days was not so keen and exacting as it is in ours; that men were contented with evidence which we should deem insufficient to establish their conclusion; that we cannot therefore accept their convictions without revising the grounds on which they rest. Now there is truth in this observation, if we apply it to certain departments of literary evidence; the authorship of a book, for example, or the value of a local tradition. But there is no truth in it as applied to a fact attested as was the Resurrection of Jesus Christ; a broad public fact of the highest possible interest. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ either did take place or it did not. The first converts were at least as interested as we are in ascertaining the truth. And the common-sense methods of finding out whether a fact of this kind is true do not vary every one, or five hundred years: they are always the same. And if we find a number of witnesses in their senses asserting that they saw, touched, heard a living man, it is not reasonable to say that they only saw a corpse or

<sup>1</sup> 2 St. Pet. i. 16.

a phantom, and that fancy did the rest. One or two people may be hallucinated : but not a multitude. A large number of people will not easily be so swayed by a single interest or a single passion as to believe simultaneously in a story that has no foundation in fact.

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[Here follows a passage which traverses ground already occupied in Sermon V.]

## II.

The fact of the Resurrection is the ground of the remonstrance of the angels with the Holy Women,—“Why seek ye the living among the dead?” But is this question applicable only to them during that pause when they felt the shock of the empty tomb? Let us consider.

First of all, then, it would seem that we may literally seek the Living among the dead if we seek Christ in a Christianity, so termed, which denies the Resurrection. Strange to say, there are men in our day who deny the true Resurrection of Jesus, yet still cling to the Christian name. They make much of the moral teaching of Jesus; of His precepts about self-knowledge and self-conquest; of His marvellous example. When the French Protestant Synod met last year in Paris, this idea of Christianity without a Risen Christ, which has its exponents nearer home, found public expression. It was urged on behalf of the advanced school of unbelief in the Synod, that denial of the Resurrection did not really much matter. “We agree with you,” said a representative of that school to their believing opponents, led by M. Guizot, “we agree with you in valuing the moral teaching of Jesus; why should we quarrel about His corpse?”<sup>1</sup> But if St. Paul had been there he certainly would have held that this question about the “corpse” of Jesus Christ is vital. If His Body never left the grave, if it has somewhere mingled with the dust of earth; then, however we may be attracted by His moral teaching, we have no ground for hoping in Him as our Redeemer: there is nothing to prove that He was the Son of God in the way He pointed

<sup>1</sup> M. Colani said in this Synod, of our Lord’s Crucified Body, “le cadavre qui a été mis en terre . . . reste en terre et s’y décompose,” and he even asserted that this was St. Paul’s belief.—Bersier, *Histoire du Synode Général de l’Eglise Réformée de France*, i. 279. He was effectively answered by M. Bois.—*Ibid.* p. 311.

out, or that He has established any new relation between earth and heaven. "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."<sup>1</sup> "Ye are yet in your sins : then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."<sup>2</sup> That is St. Paul's estimate of the question ; and it is in keeping with the earnestness with which he and the other first heralds of the Gospel made the Resurrection of Jesus the main subject of their teaching. No ! wherever the pulse of Christian faith beats ever so faintly, we hear, at the tomb of the Redeemer, as the very first truth to which it clings, its confession of the precious, invigorating words, "He is not here ; He is risen." And wherever Christ's true Resurrection from the tomb is denied, though genius and eloquence should do their best to disguise the aching void, there, depend upon it, Christ is not. And if souls are ever to be awakened from this dreary caricature of His religion, it will be by some voice, Divine or human, heard in the depths of the conscience, "Why seek ye the living among the dead ?"

But nearly the same thing may happen, in cases where the Resurrection is not denied, but nevertheless men fail to see what habits of thought about our Lord it involves. How many, who would not think of denying the Resurrection, yet think of Jesus Christ our Lord habitually only or chiefly as one of the greatest men in the past history of the world ! That He was at least this would be admitted by any educated and sensible heathen ; the French infidels generally rank Him with Socrates, Confucius, and other great moralists and teachers of the past. Even if it be admitted that He is, as a teacher, on a totally distinct level from any of these ; that He is incomparably the greatest teacher who has ever appeared upon the scene of human life, still if we think of Him only in this way, we are seeking the living among the dead. Those other teachers whom I have named, and such as they, where are they now ? They have given an impulse to human thought : they have been the founders of institutions ; they have created literatures ; they have shaped large masses of feeling and conviction which to this hour are powers in the world. They live, in their works, in their influence, in the minds which reproduce them ; they live as names honourably attached to great causes, great convictions, great organisations. But where are they themselves ? Somewhere, we know not where, under conditions we know not

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 17, 18.



what, they live, as undying spirits in another world of being, awaiting the great account. But they have no personal present concern in this our world. And in estimating their influence we refer only to what they said and did, hundreds of years, or a few years, ago : we do not for a moment suppose that their action among men goes on still as a continuous though unseen force.

Now, a real believer in Jesus never thinks of Him in this way only or chiefly ; as a mighty power in the past history of the world ; as he might think of the great teachers and writers in question. He is not, as they are, in any sense among the dead. He has left to the tomb nothing but His winding-sheet. He is not only, as they are, one of the great influences of the past ; He lives now as a pervading energetic influence among men. True, we do not see Him as He was seen eighteen hundred years ago in the villages and on the hill-sides of Galilee. But for all that, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to make us feel Him present among us ; present in this world as a living power, just as truly as He was present then. His Life is continued on among us ; only its conditions are changed. "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."<sup>1</sup> And the fact, external to himself, upon which the Christian falls back when he would remind himself of this, is the solid, unalterable, unyielding fact of the Resurrection ; the fact by which Jesus made it plain to the senses of men that He had passed for ever from the realm of death ; the fact which He proclaims, as from the throne of heaven, so in the inmost Christian consciousness, "I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."<sup>2</sup> To think of Him as only one of the great teachers of the world, who have come and disappeared, is to lose sight of the significance of His Resurrection from the grave : it is to rank Him in thought with men whose eminence has not saved them from the lot of mortality, and whose dust has long since mouldered in the tomb. It is to lose sight of the line which parts the super-human from the human. It is to seek the living among the dead.

Yet more literally do we seek the living among the dead, if without formally rejecting Christianity we give the best of our thought, of our heart, of our enthusiasm, to systems of thought, or to modes of feeling, which Jesus Christ has set aside. The love of change, which is so deeply implanted in human nature,

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 18.

is constantly leading men, in one form or another, to do this. True, if they did but know it, this love of change itself should attach them indissolubly to Jesus. For what is the love of change, the thirst for novelty? It proceeds from the noblest distinction of the human soul, from man's appetite for That Infinite Being Who made us for Himself, and will not allow us lastingly to rest in any but Himself. This love of something new is man's witness in himself, and to himself, that nothing finite, nothing perishable, nothing created, can really satisfy him. And Christianity in all earnest and thorough souls does satisfy this want: men find in it that repose to give which is the prerogative of the Divine;—"Lord," they say, "to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."<sup>1</sup> But in every age a large percentage of Christians look at Christianity only on the surface; dwell only on its human characteristics; miss its Divinity. The seed falls by the wayside and on the rock, as well as elsewhere; and so old modes of thought and feeling, which might have been supposed to be for ever discredited, regain something of their power.

The Renaissance of the fifteenth century was a great example of this: it was a reaction in the direction of pure paganism. For nearly a hundred years all over Europe educated men and women tried to write, feel, and live, as had the Romans and Greeks in the old pagan days. And some of them succeeded remarkably well, to the enrichment undoubtedly of certain departments of art and literature, but at the serious cost of fundamental morality. The Reformation, on the Continent at least, was on one side a protest against the paganism of the Renaissance. The Renaissance was in Christendom what the craving for the flesh-pots of Egypt had been in Jewish history; what the folly of the Galatian Christian, in attempting to reimpose circumcision, had been in early Apostolic history. The life of Christendom is Christ; and for the Christian nations to throw themselves back into the thoughts and feelings of the old pagan world, in the hope of renewing their youth by contact with its moral and mental life, is to seek the living among the dead.

This holds equally good of the enthusiasm for some materialistic explanations of the theory of the universe, which are very popular just now, as being put forward by very able men, who can write very good English. The idea that force and matter are either or both of them eternal, and

<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 68.

that all life, not excepting its highest forms, is the product of their fated action upon each other, is by no means, at least in its fundamental features, a novelty. The old world of Greece and Rome was familiar with it. Yet to suppose that the true life of humanity, that all that can raise man above sense, above passion, above selfishness, to the level of those higher aspirations of which he is conscious, is to be discovered in the tomb of matter, is an infatuation of which none have spoken more strongly than spiritualist thinkers who are not Christians. We Christians know that the only permanent safeguard for spirituality of aim, of thought and life, is to be found in Christianity, and particularly in faith in Christ's Resurrection. Here is the mystery which bids the imperious laws of matter subserve the interests of man's higher nature. To seek man's true life, in any materialistic system, is to seek life among the dead.

We may not be tempted, in these ways, to seek the living among the dead teachers or dead elements of old or untrustworthy ways of thinking. But there is a risk of our doing so, certainly not less serious and very much more common, to which we are all exposed. As you know, my Christian friends, our Lord's Resurrection is a moral as well as an intellectual power. While it convinces us of the truth of Christianity it creates in us the Christian life. We are risen with Christ. Just as we die with Him to our old nature, we rise with Him in newness of life. Just as we have shared His tomb, we share, even here and now, His victory. This is not the language of a recondite mysticism. It is the constant language of that most practical of men, St. Paul. The moral resurrection of Christians is a fact of experience. Resurrection from the grip of bad habits, from the charnel-house of bad passions; resurrection from the enervation, corruption, and decay of bad thoughts, bad words, bad deeds, to a new life with Christ, to the life of warm and pure affections, the life of a ready and vigorous will, of a firm and buoyant hope, of a clear strong faith, of a wide and tender charity. St. Paul says that the germ of this life is given us in baptism :<sup>1</sup> we then rise from the grave with Jesus Christ. And the one point which the Apostle would have us recollect is that "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once, but in that He liveth, He

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 4; Gal. iii. 27.

liveth unto God.”<sup>1</sup> We are therefore to reckon ourselves “to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

But, as a matter of fact, how do we risen Christians really act? We fall back, willingly or wilfully, into the very habits we have renounced. Our repentance is too often like the Lent of Louis the Fourteenth; it is a paroxysm, followed, almost as a matter of course, by the relapse of Easter. To do the great French monarch justice, he did not expect to find Christ’s Presence in sin and worldliness: as do they who complain of the intellectual difficulties of faith and prayer, while their lives are disposed of in such a manner, that it would be wonderful indeed if faith and prayer could escape suffocation, in that chaos of everything save the things which suggest God.

Surely Easter has its warnings as well as Lent: its warnings as well as its joys. It dictates to conscience the continuous cry,—Why seek the living among the dead? Over the tomb of worldliness and of sin, angels read the legend: “He is not here; He is risen.” He is not to be found in this home of refined sensuality, in that atmosphere of frivolity and levity, in this clever but profane writing, in that brilliant but insincere society, in those haunts, those manners, that language, those sympathies. Excitement, yes! you may find that, such as it is; the surface excitement, which cannot drown the deep wail of restless misery that is heard in the depths of the soul. But life, true life,—the life of illuminated, enfranchised, invigorated men,—never. It is to be found only by those who do not lose the precious moments of existence in seeking the living among the dead. One great lesson of Easter is permanent elevation of aim. Jesus has left the tomb for good: we must do so too. We are surrounded in this life, by little else than by the chambers of the dead; and the painted imagery which decorates their walls, as of yore the tombs of Egyptian monarchs, might for a moment make us think that they are other than they are. Our true wisdom is to know that life is travestied in these sepulchres of thought, these sepulchres of morality; and that the life of emancipated souls is to be found only with the Risen and Eternal Christ, Who came down indeed among us, to visit us in our errors and our sins, but Whose angels have traced over all faiths but one, all rules of life but one, the motto which proclaims His triumph and our duty: “He is not here; He is risen.”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 11.

## SERMON XI.

### THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION.

PHIL. III. 10.

*That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection.*

THE power of Christ's Resurrection! Here is one of those phrases which we only understand when we remember that it is in tacit contrast to another phrase which suggests it. "Power" seems here to be contrasted with "fact." In every occurrence, whether great or unimportant, there are to be considered, first, the fact, or, that which actually occurred, and secondly, its consequences, actual or possible, or, what St. Paul calls its power. We know the fact of an occurrence when we have handled the proofs which show that it really took place; when we know how it has been described, what were its several aspects, near or distant, seen from without or from within. We know the fact when we have mastered its scene, its mechanism, its dimensions. But we know the power of an occurrence when we can trace what its effects have been, or what, but for disturbing or interrupting causes, they might have been, or might be, whether in the world at large, or upon individuals, whether upon others or upon ourselves. It is easier to apprehend a fact than to take the measure of its consequences, its practical meaning, its power. If I throw a stone as far as I can, I can ascertain without much difficulty the weight of the stone, the moment at which it leaves my hand, the distance of the spot at which it touches the ground from the spot on which I am standing. So much for the fact. But what is hard to ascertain is the effect of the stone's passage through the air; the thousands or millions of insects instantaneously disabled or destroyed by it; the radiation of disturbance caused by the displacement of the atmosphere,



and extending, it may be, into regions which defy or escape calculation.

All of us understand, more or less, at least, the general outline and succession of recent events in Egypt, but what will be, in the course of years, their import and influence upon the condition and history of our own country and of the world who shall say? This is a matter much less easy to determine: it needs the lapse of time, observation, reflection, very varied experience, in order to do so with any approach to accuracy. So on Good Friday morning we were all of us startled by hearing that a great lawyer and statesman had passed away:<sup>1</sup> and it is not necessary to subscribe to all of Lord Cairns's opinions in order to do justice to the great ability and to the fearless conscientiousness which have throughout marked his career. But what will be the effect, or as St. Paul would say the "power," of the withdrawal of so prominent a figure from the public life of our country, and at such a time as the present? This question also can only be answered some months, perhaps some years, hence; and even then, the influence of a single mind upon those with whom he acts, or upon men in general, is not easy to measure with anything like exactness. You see, my hearers, to apprehend a fact is one thing; it is quite another to understand its power.

When then St. Paul utters his earnest prayer that he may know the power of Christ's Resurrection, he implies that he already has knowledge of the fact. He had indeed no sort of doubt about it. Here perhaps some of you may recall ground over which, at this sacred season, we have travelled together in former years; I mean the nature and vigour of the witness which St. Paul in particular bears to the fact of the Resurrection, and by which accordingly he unveils before our eyes the basis of his own conviction. St. Paul wrote his First Epistle to the Corinthians before any of the Gospels had been written; and that Epistle is one of the only four books in the New Testament against the genuineness and authenticity of which unbelieving criticism has found absolutely nothing to allege. There is, in fact, in a purely sceptical judgment, no more reason for doubting that St. Paul wrote that Epistle than for doubting that Sir Walter Scott wrote *Waverley*. And what does St. Paul tell the Corinthians about our Lord's Resurrection? He tells them that, while he was writing, there were more than two hundred and fifty persons still living who had

<sup>1</sup> Earl Cairns died at Bournemouth, April 2, 1885.



seen our Saviour on one occasion after His rising from the dead. "He was seen of five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present."<sup>1</sup> Now here was an assertion which the Corinthians might, if they would, verify for themselves. There was intercourse enough between Greece and the coast of Syria; and any Corinthian who thought that St. Paul was too impetuous, or too credulous, or anything else of the kind, had only to investigate the accuracy of his statement by paying a visit to some of the two hundred and fifty survivors, and cross-questioning them for himself. St. Paul's statement was itself a challenge to do so. And if, so far as we know, the challenge was not accepted, this would only have been because men felt that unless the Apostle had been quite sure of his ground, the statement would never have been made. Even those who do not, with the Church, venerate in St. Paul a glorious Saint and Apostle, enthroned, now that his life of toil and suffering is over, not far from the very throne of Christ in heaven—even they must, and do, gather from his writings that he was a remarkably clever man, and a man of shrewd common-sense. And as such, putting for the moment his inspiration out of sight, he never, we may be sure, would have made an assertion like that before us had he believed it to be liable to be disputed upon examination; had he been less than certain of its literal and severe accuracy. St. Paul was convinced that Christ had risen, for other reasons, as we know, but also because more than two hundred and fifty people were still living who, if questioned, would say that they had seen Him.

And St. Paul, being thus sure of the fact of the Resurrection, was not embarrassed by any *a priori* doctrine bidding him ignore it; he was not like those schoolmen whom Lord Bacon condemned, and who, instead of learning what to think about nature from the facts of nature, endeavoured to persuade themselves that the facts of nature corresponded to what they already thought about it. If a man says that miracle is impossible or incredible, no amount of proof that the Resurrection actually occurred is likely to satisfy him. When some early navigators, of whom Herodotus tells us, coasted round Africa, and returned with the story that they had reached a region at which their shadows at noonday pointed toward the south, their report was treated as ludicrous by the inhabitants of the Mediterranean seaboard, and among them, by the great historian

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

himself; since the constant experience of their own neighbourhood furnished them, as they thought, with ample reason for thinking that nothing of the kind was possible. When asserting the fact of the Resurrection, St. Paul planted his foot upon the rock of experience; he was proof against the seductions of the idols whether of the den or of the cave. He had no need to pray, as have many in our time, that he might be assured of the fact of Christ's Resurrection. What he did pray for was that he might increasingly know its power.

Now, we may be sure we can trace only very partially the range of power which attaches to such an event as the Resurrection of our Lord. But let us do what we may within such narrow spheres as are the thought and life of man.

### I.

The power of Christ's Resurrection, then, may be observed, first of all, and generally, in the way in which a true belief in it enables us to realise habitually the moral government of the world by God.

Our age has many characteristics which honourably distinguish it from earlier times, and which will be pointed to hereafter by historians. But it is not an age in which men believe, as they believed in the past, that, whatever happens or is permitted, all is overruled by a Being Who is perfectly Good and perfectly Wise.

When people are not deliberately and consciously sceptical about this, they often believe it only in a languid, hesitating way. They feel the doubt which floats in the intellectual air around them, and which enervates their mental grasp of the truth. We may perhaps flatter ourselves that this weakened hold on elementary truths is the result of a wider mental culture than was enjoyed by our fathers; of greater readiness to welcome new impressions; of a more judicial and balanced habit of mind. In this manner disbelief in an overruling providence may assume in our eyes the colours of a distinction, if not of a virtue. And it is only when we find ourselves at one of the sterner crises in life, and the heavens seem as brass above our heads, and we cry, and there is, we think, none to answer, that we understand the extent and the misery of our loss.

And when some man,<sup>1</sup> not a clergyman, appears on the scene

<sup>1</sup> The late General Gordon, killed at Khartoum, January 1885.

of our public life, to whom the Divine government of the world is as certain and as obvious as the action and language of his friends, or of the members of his family; a man to whom prayer is the most natural form of conversation, and the Bible and the imitation of Christ the rule of conduct;—we experience almost a new sensation, as at the presence of a striking and original apparition. Yet if we knew more of the days that have preceded us, we should know that the type which for the moment so fascinates and astonishes us, has been heretofore even the prevailing type among the sincere worshippers of Jesus Christ.

There are circumstances, no doubt, in the modern world which make belief in the Divine government harder for us than it was for our ancestors. One such circumstance is our wider outlook. Thanks to the press, the railway, the telegraph, we know a great deal more of what is going on all over the world, at the same time, than has any previous generation of men. And one consequence is that human life presents itself to many minds as a much more tangled and inexplicable thing than it ever did before. The picture which is brought before us is so complex, so blurred; the details are so much more importunate than any obviously presiding and ruling principle; the disappointments in store for the conscience which is searching for clear traces of a law of right vigorously asserting itself are so frequent and so great, that men lose heart where heart and purpose are especially needful. They lazily acquiesce in some indistinct conception of the world which treats it as an unexplored and inexplicable moral chaos, amid the confusions of which it is vain to look for any clear note of a Reign of Righteousness maintained behind the veil.

Now here the certainty that Jesus Christ rose from the dead asserts what St. Paul calls its power. For when Jesus Christ was crucified, it might have seemed, it did seem, that the sun of God's justice had gone down behind thick clouds; and that a moral darkness, of which that in the sky was but a shadow, had settled on the earth. It might have seemed that while all the vices were being crowned and feasted in Rome, all the virtues could be crucified, and crucified with impunity, in Jerusalem. It might have seemed that we lived in a world where nothing was more surely at a discount than moral beauty, and nothing more certain of the future than physical and brute force.

And when He burst forth from the grave in which they laid Him under seal and stone, He proclaimed to men's senses, as

well as to their consciences, that the real law which rules the world is moral, not material law ; and that if the sun of God's righteousness is at times overclouded in human history, it is sure to reappear. To know that Jesus Christ rose from the dead is to know that, whatever may be the perplexities of the moment or of the age, the world is really swayed by God's most holy and over-ruling providence.

## II.

NEXT, the power of the Resurrection of Christ is seen in the firm persuasion which it should create, in our own days as in those of the Apostles, that the Christian Creed is true ; true as a whole, and in its several parts. Thus the Resurrection of Christ has a twofold aspect. It is at once a proof that the Christian Creed is true, and a truth of the Christian Creed.

There are many truths of Christianity which do not contribute anything to prove its general truth, although they could not be lost sight of or denied without fatally impairing its integrity. Take for an example the truth of our Lord's perpetual intercession in heaven. Nothing tells more powerfully upon the life and conscience of a believing Christian than the knowledge that our living but unseen Saviour is ever engaged in one ceaseless act of self-oblation on high on behalf of His members and servants here on earth ; on behalf of all and of each of them. "He ever liveth to make intercession for us."<sup>1</sup> But this truth does not attest the truth of any other part of our Creed ; although it is, if we may reverently say so, their inevitable complement. We believe in our Lord's intercession because His Apostles have so taught us. We do not believe in the Creed as a whole because we believe in His intercession.

It is otherwise with the Resurrection, which, as I have said, is not only an article of the Christian faith, but a proof that the Christian faith is true as a whole. It is this because it is the certificate of our Lord's mission from heaven, to which He Himself pointed as the warrant of His claims. He laid this stress on His coming Resurrection on two occasions especially : in His saying about the destruction and rebuilding of the Temple, and in His saying about the sign of the Prophet Jonah.<sup>2</sup> His Words came in effect to this : ' You Jews doubt whether I have any right to teach you, and to proclaim Myself as I do. Very well ; wait a short while, and an event will

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> St. John ii. 19 ; St. Matt. xii. 39, 40.

take place which will prove that your misgivings or doubts are unwarranted. I shall be put to death, and then I shall rise from the dead on the third day. This will be a counter-sign of My mission from heaven: if it does not take place, reject; if it does, believe Me.'

It is a mistake to say that our Lord referred to His Resurrection only on rare occasions, and that it had no such place in His Mind as in the teaching of His Apostles. For it is plain from the Gospels that He was constantly dwelling on it. Thus He alluded to it, at least by implication, in the synagogue of Capernaum, when He spoke of the Son of Man ascending up where He was before.<sup>1</sup> He foretold both His Death and Resurrection explicitly after the confession of His Divinity by Simon Peter at Cæsarea Philippi.<sup>2</sup> While coming down from the Mount of the Transfiguration, He bade the disciples who had been with Him tell no man what they had seen until the Son of Man was risen from the dead.<sup>3</sup> After healing the demoniac, He is crossing Galilee, and He explains to His disciples that He will be delivered into the hands of men, and that they will kill Him, and the third day He will rise.<sup>4</sup> Still more striking is the saying that in dying He does not submit to the irresistible; that no man takes His Life from Him; that He has power to lay it down, and has power to take it again.<sup>5</sup> In going up to Jerusalem He repeats the prediction about dying and rising with great detail and precision;<sup>6</sup> and in the Upper Chamber the gracious promise, "A little while and ye shall see Me,"<sup>7</sup> certainly points to the Resurrection. Even on the road to Gethsemane, when the little company had left the Upper Chamber, and had sung a hymn, He assures them, "After I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."<sup>8</sup>

The Resurrection was thus constantly before His Mind, because it was to be the warrant of His mission. And when He did rise, He redeemed the pledge which He had given to His disciples and to the world. The first preachers of Christianity understood this. The Resurrection was the proof to which they constantly pointed that our Lord was really what He claimed to be. "Jesus and the Resurrection" was the popular name at Athens for the Gospel as taught by St. Paul.<sup>9</sup> "This Jesus, Whom ye have crucified, hath God raised

<sup>1</sup> St. John vi. 62.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xvii. 9; St. Mark ix. 9, 10.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 21.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xvii. 23.<sup>5</sup> St. John x. 18.<sup>6</sup> St. Matt. xx. 17-19; St. Mark x. 32-34; St. Luke xviii. 31-33.<sup>7</sup> St. John xvi. 16.<sup>8</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 32.<sup>9</sup> Acts xvii. 18.



up," had been the keynote to the early teaching of St. Peter.<sup>1</sup> The Resurrection was the truth which filled the early Church with its first converts. The Resurrection was the decisive proof that Christianity was from God.

Let us ask, more precisely, What is the true value of the fact that our Lord rose from the dead among the credentials of Christianity? what is the measure of its evidential power?

Here, it would seem, there are two opposite mistakes to be avoided.

There is the mistake which was made nearly a century ago by a writer of genius, who was, however, unduly influenced by the wish to simplify questions which are not always really simple,—I mean, Archdeacon Paley. Paley wanted to put the evidence of the truth of Christianity, as the phrase goes, in a nutshell; and, in his well-known *Evidences*, he makes the whole case of Christianity rest upon the fact that the Resurrection was so certain to its first preachers that they willingly gave their lives to attest it. Paley's mistake lay, not in insisting upon this fact, which is indeed of the first importance as an evidence of Christianity, but in insisting upon it, as if it stood alone, and would, of itself and unsupported, prove to all minds the truth of the Christian Creed. The consequence has been that, in many minds of our own and two preceding generations, Paley's book has failed to create or to reinforce the convictions which its author was anxious to serve; men have felt that more stress has been laid on a single line of evidence than it will properly bear. The truth is, that the evidences of Christianity are not one and simple, but many and complex. Their strength lies in their convergence; and the conviction of the truth of the Resurrection which was held by the Apostles is only one of several lines of argument which point towards a single and central truth, although of these it is the most important. And when this is overlooked, there is always risk of a catastrophe: the fabric which its Divine Architect meant to rest upon a group of pillars cannot be safely rested by us on one.

The other mistake is of later date, and much more serious. From saying that the Resurrection alone proves Christianity to be true, men have, in some instances, come of late to say that it is of no value whatever as an evidence of Christianity. Christianity is said to be recommended solely by the moral character of Christ. The supernatural incidents of His earthly

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 22-24, 32.



Life, and notably His Resurrection, are treated as an embarrassing addition to what else would be a simple and convincing exhibition of moral excellence. We believe the Resurrection, men have said, if we do believe it, for the sake of the religion which seems to warrant it; we do not believe in Christianity for the sake of the Resurrection.

Enough has already been said to show that this estimate of the evidential value of the Resurrection is altogether opposed to the mind of our Lord and His Apostles. They did not mean the Resurrection to stand alone, but they assigned to it a high, nay the highest place, among the facts which go to show that Christianity is true. The real value of the Resurrection, as an evidence of Christianity, would seem to be that it is a counter-sign in the world of nature to the teaching of our Lord in the court of conscience. The outward miracle assures us, through the senses, that the Being Who is the Author of nature is the same Being as He Who speaks to conscience in the Moral Law, in the Beatitudes, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Last Discourse, in the whole character and teaching of Jesus Christ. If we heard the inward verdict of conscience alone, we might doubt whether there was anything external to ourselves which really warranted it. If we witnessed the outward miracle alone, we might see in it a mere wonder, with no moral significance, with no ascertainable relation to the inward and the spiritual. But when the Teacher Whose voice pierces, rouses, quickens conscience, is accredited by an interference with, or a suspension of, the observed course of nature, the combined evidence is reasonably overwhelming: deep answers to deep, sphere to sphere, the moral and the material are in felt harmony and the combination is more than sufficient to warrant that assent of the mind and heart which we call faith. And in this way a persuasion of the literal certainty of the Resurrection is at the present day, as of old, a power which has weight with the most well-informed and thoughtful minds, as decisively attesting the claims of Christianity.

### III.

And thirdly, the power of the Resurrection should be traced and felt in the spiritual and moral life of Christians.

Let us remind ourselves that our Lord Jesus Christ is not merely our one authoritative Teacher, not merely our Redeemer

from sin and death, but also, and especially, through real union with us, the Author of a new life in us. He gives us a new nature, which is indeed His Own. St. Paul teaches us this truth again and again, and by a great variety of expressions. Sometimes he speaks of our Lord as though He were a sphere of being within which the Christian lives : "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new."<sup>1</sup> Sometimes he speaks of Him as of an inhabitant of the Christian soul. "Christ in you," he says to the Colossians, "the Hope of Glory."<sup>2</sup> This union is not in St. Paul's mouth the language of metaphor ; it is to him just as real a thing as eating or walking, or reading or preaching, or going to Athens or to Jerusalem. It is an actual experience of which he is certain. It began with him when he was baptized by Ananias ; for "as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."<sup>3</sup> It was deepened and strengthened in many ways, but especially by the reception of that other Holy Sacrament, in which, unlike the careless Corinthians, he really "discerned the Lord's Body,"<sup>4</sup> and knew that he was admitted to the closest contact with the Source of his highest life.

Let none think that, in insisting on the Presence of Christ in the bodies and souls of Christians, we are forgetting the office of the Holy Spirit, or confounding the work of the Spirit and the Son. The office of the Spirit is to convey Christ's Nature and to interpret His teaching to Christians. This is one of the reasons for His being so constantly termed in the New Testament the Spirit of Christ. "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you,"<sup>5</sup> was our Lord's description of His office. And thus He is the Agent Who makes the Christian Sacraments effectual in conveying Christ's Human Nature to Christians. The baptized puts on Christ,<sup>6</sup> but he is born of water and of the Spirit ;<sup>7</sup> the communicant eats the Body and drinks the Blood of Christ,<sup>8</sup> but it is the Spirit that quickeneth<sup>9</sup> the dead elements, and makes them veils and vehicles of the unseen Gift. Our Lord then dwells in Christians ; their bodies and souls are temples of His Presence ;<sup>10</sup> His Incarnation is perpetuated in His living Church.<sup>11</sup> And, as a consequence, the New Testament teaches

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 27.<sup>3</sup> Gal. iii. 27.<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 29.<sup>5</sup> St. John xvi. 14.<sup>6</sup> Gal. iii. 27.<sup>7</sup> St. John iii. 5.<sup>8</sup> Ibid. vi. 53.<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 63.<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.<sup>11</sup> Ibid. xii. 12.

us that the mysteries of His earthly Life are reproduced, after a measure, in the Christian soul. If Christ is born supernaturally of a Virgin Mother, the Christian is made God's child by adoption and grace,<sup>1</sup> and Apostles are in travail until Christ be formed in their converts.<sup>2</sup> If Christ is crucified on Mount Calvary, the Christian, too, has a Calvary within, where he is crucified with Christ,<sup>3</sup> where he crucifies the flesh with the affections and lusts.<sup>4</sup> If Christ, while His disciples behold, is taken up into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Christian in heart and mind with Him ascends, and with Him continually dwells;<sup>5</sup> nay, he is, as St. Paul says, made to sit together with Him in heavenly places.<sup>6</sup> And in like manner, if Christ rose from the dead the third day, according to the Scriptures, the Christian also has experience of an inward resurrection. As at a primitive baptism the adult neophyte was plunged beneath the waters, and then lifted up amid prayers and benedictions, so in this Sacrament Christians are still buried with Christ, and raised to newness of life.<sup>7</sup> And if the baptismal gift be impaired or forfeited, a second putting forth of the Resurrection power becomes necessary. A resurrection in penitence is a new effort of the power of recovery from sin and death, issuing from contact with the Risen Redeemer.

All this seems to be the language of metaphor, or the language of mysticism, until it has been discovered to be the record of an experience. St. Paul knew that it meant, or might mean, a solemn reality. It was this inward power of Christ's Resurrection, in its ever-increasing fulness, that he chiefly desired to know. Of this power of Christ's Resurrection lodged in the recesses of the Christian soul, of this moral and spiritual resurrection which issues from, and corresponds with, the literal Resurrection of Jesus Christ from His grave, there are three leading characteristics.

1. Our Lord rose really. It was not a phantom that haunted the Upper Chamber, or the road to Emmaus, or the shores of the Sea of Galilee; the Apostles had but to handle Him, and see, for a phantom had no such flesh and bones as they might see He had. And an Easter resurrection from sin should be no less real, will be no less real, if it is His power by which we are rising. The flesh and bones, the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 15.    <sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 19.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid. ii. 20; vi. 14.    <sup>4</sup> Ibid. v. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Col. iii. 1-3.

<sup>6</sup> Eph. ii. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. vi. 3, 4

actual substance of recovered life, true prayers, true confessions, true resolutions, truth in thought and word and act, are indispensable. To have a name that we live again, and yet to be dead,<sup>1</sup> is only too easy : it is scarcely less easy to impose upon ourselves than upon others with false appearances of life. Little indeed will a phantom-resurrection avail us here or hereafter ; let us pray for that first mark of Christ's Resurrection power,—reality.

2. Our Lord really rose, but He rose to lead, for the most part, a hidden life. On the day of His Resurrection He appeared five times, but rarely afterwards during the forty days that preceded the Ascension. So it is with the risen life of the soul. It is not constantly flaunted before the eyes of men ; it seeks retirement, solitude, and the sincerities which these insure. They whose religious life is perpetually displayed to the public eye may have risen really. But at least they are very unlike our Risen Lord. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. . . . For . . . your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, Who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."<sup>2</sup> Reserve in speaking about ourselves may make heavy demands upon buoyant and impetuous natures. Frequent retirement for communion with God is not natural to flesh and blood : it fails to satisfy the demands for excitement and human sympathy, which enter so largely into much of our modern religion. But let us be sure that it is a true note of the presence of Christ's Resurrection power, that we should be thankful to be often alone with God.

3. And thirdly, our Lord "being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once : but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."<sup>1</sup> His Resurrection power does not lend itself to the perpetual alternations of relapse and recovery, which mark the lives of so many Christians : "Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more." It is sad work when Easter is only reached to forfeit by relaxation what little may have been gained in Lent and Passion-tide. We may sink into the grave of sin once too often. Surely we should pray with the Ancient Church—

<sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. vi. 9, 10.

“ O Jesus, from the death of sin  
Keep us, we pray ; so shalt Thou be  
The everlasting Paschal joy  
Of all the souls new-born to Thee.”

God grant to all of us that St. Paul's desire may be fulfilled, alike in our convictions and in our lives ; and that we may know something of what the power of Christ's Resurrection really is. As the years go by, our natural forces become sensibly weaker ; they will fail altogether at the approach of death. But here is a Power which death cannot extinguish or arrest since it is itself the conquest and repudiation of death ; a Power which may enable the weakest of us to feel that, while his bodily strength decays, he is enriched with a new energy that comes from heaven.

## SERMON XII.

### EASTER HOPES.

I ST. PETER 1. 3.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again into a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

ST. PETER addresses his Epistle, not, as St. Paul's manner is, to some particular Church, but to Christians scattered over a wide extent of territory throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, and Bithynia. It is true that these districts join on to each other; that they are all comprised between the Black Sea and the Gulf of Cyprus; and that the cruel yoke of the Turk has, in the course of four centuries and a half, reduced them to a deal level of barbarism, obliterating the sharp provincial distinctions which still existed in antiquity. But when St. Peter wrote, although the Roman power was established throughout all these districts, the empire was still young, and it was wisely tolerant of provincial characteristics. As a consequence, the people to whom St. Peter wrote differed not less widely than do the inhabitants of the various states of Europe at the present day. Doubtless the "strangers" would have been mainly, although not exclusively, converts from Judaism; since of these converts St. Peter had particular care, after the division of labour between the leading Apostles which St. Paul mentions in writing to the Galatians.<sup>1</sup> They would have had for the most part the blood of Abraham in their veins; and yet, notwithstanding this sense of a common descent, which since their conversion had lost its religious value, they would have shared, in many respects, the divergent provincial sympathies of the populations around them. They would have been parted by different customs, different walks in life, different

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 9.



commercial interests, different relations with the various local governments, very different ideas upon a great many subjects which form the staple of interest in ordinary lives. But as St. Peter thought over these scattered strangers, with all their manifold divergencies from each other, he felt that they had one thing in common. They were, as he expresses it, "sanctified by the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ."<sup>1</sup> And this implied a great deal beyond itself. It meant that the horizons of their lives were greatly enlarged, that they were living, not for this world merely, but for a world beyond it. And therefore the Apostle bursts forth in a hymn of praise, which the genius of Dr. Wesley has made familiar to us at this season in our Cathedral service; "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."<sup>2</sup>

To the question, "What has the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave done for us Christians?" a great many answers may be given. Of these, the answer which Christ's Own Apostles would have given, is that, by rising from the dead, Jesus Christ proved that He had a right to speak about God, about the old religion of His countrymen, about the religious conduct of the influential classes among them, above all, about Himself. When He was asked to give a sign, which might be accepted as evidence of the commission which He had from above, He said, that just as the old prophet Jonah had been buried out of sight in the whale, and yet restored to his ministry and his countrymen, so He Himself, stricken by the pangs of death, would be laid in the darkness of the tomb, in the very heart of the earth, and yet would burst the fetters of the grave, and "rise again."<sup>3</sup> And accordingly when this prediction had been realised, the fact was appealed to, as we see from the Acts of the Apostles, by the earliest preachers of Christianity in almost every sermon. It evidently did their work in compelling men to listen to what they had to say about their Lord, better than any other topic they could urge. And St. Paul, to cite no other illustrations, begins his great Epistle to the Romans by saying, "that Jesus had been declared to be the Son of God by the Resurrection from the dead."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. i. 2.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 3, 4.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xii. 40; xx. 19.<sup>4</sup> Rom. i. 4.

But the Resurrection has done other things for us besides this its great evidential achievement ; and upon one of these other results of it, I desire to dwell this afternoon. It has endowed Christians, who treat it as a serious matter of fact, with the great grace of hope. St. Peter feels the preciousness of this when he exclaims, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

## I.

To say that we cannot get on without hope is a truism. But as truisms are more apt to be lost sight of than paradoxes, it is a truism which will bear repeating. Hope is not the salt, it is the sinew of man's moral life. Explain it as we may, there is no doubt about the fact that the human mind must, to a certain extent, live in and for the future. The brute is content with the present : he feeds, fights, gambols, sleeps, and makes the most of each successive sensation, because his attention is not diverted from it by forecasts about a coming time : he apprehends nothing, until the experience of his senses, appealing to a faculty of association, forces the apprehended danger right in upon him. He has no view or theory of his life, of his place in creation, of his relation to other living creatures around him, of his capacity for and title to a coming destiny of any sort. And herein the brute differs from man ; because man is so little content with and occupied or exhausted by the thoughts, sensations, and interests of the present moment, that he cannot but look forward, whether to a nearer or to a more remote future. His capacity for excellence is exactly proportioned to his power of throwing himself onward into a future, which is as yet beyond his reach, and which may even be always beyond it.

This truth holds good whether we look at man as an individual or as a member of society. What is the true object of education ? Is it merely to teach a boy so much writing and arithmetic, so much history and geography, so much natural science and humane literature, so much of political or of mathematical truth ? No, it is much more than this. The great object of a wise educator is to set before the boy whom he is teaching some future to which he may aspire, and which may fire his best enthusiasms ; some future which may supply him

with a strong motive for making the most of his present opportunities ; some future upon which, during the drudgery and toil of his earlier tasks, his eye may rest, as upon the prize which will reward him, the object of his hope. It is, of course, a difficult and delicate thing to do this without developing in the boy the vice of a purely selfish ambition. But it can be done ; and if education is to be vigorous and thorough, it must be done. What becomes of a boy whose every lesson, every exercise, every effort to remember, to understand, to think, to compose, is strictly without an object ; only sterile and isolated labour having no end beyond itself, or none beyond that of avoiding certain consequences of neglect ? And does not the same rule hold in later life ? The boy becomes a man, the father of a family, and he transfers to his children some of the hope which he cherished for himself. He thinks less of what they are than of what it is probable that they will be a few years hence. He thinks over their characters, their tastes, their dispositions, the evidence they have given of fitness for a particular work in life ; and he enters upon a calculation of probabilities ; he tries to picture to himself their various positions and occupations in after years. So strong and penetrating is his sympathy, that in them he lives his own boyhood over again, only with the larger experience and wider horizon of his manhood. He may, God only knows, be destined to a terrible disappointment. But he lives in hope ; and this hope enables him to work hard for his children, and to deny himself lawful enjoyments for them, and to put up cheerfully with ingratitude or worrying, or dulness or perversity, on the part of these objects of his strongest affections, in a manner which would be impossible, had his hopes not been strongly engaged.

Nor is this less true of a professional work in life : hope is ever the motive principle of the exertions which command success. The statesman, the artist, the man of letters, the great chemist or engineer, all look forward. Minds of a lower type look forward to the reputation which will be won by success ; minds of a higher order look forward to the happiness of doing work for God by rendering some real service to their generation or to posterity. And it is this hope which sustains them under all the discouragements of weak health, of unfriendly criticism, of unfruitful efforts to mould intractable materials, of conscious present inability to compass and express the ideal of excellence which has floated before their mind's eye, and which originally roused them to exertion.

Nor is hope less essential to associations of men than to man in his individual capacity. An institution, a society, a nation which has no future before it, is already doomed. It may still exist; but its life is a thing of the past. An army is never thoroughly demoralised until the hope of victory is gone. A nation is not ruined until it has reached a point at which it remarks that it can make out for itself no prospect of expansion, development, progress, in coming years; a point at which it turns regretfully back upon itself, confessing to itself that it has exhausted its destiny, and has only to await the onset from without or the collapse from within, which will seal the doom of which it has already felt the terrible presentiment.

And as hope is thus necessary to the temporary well-being of societies of men, and of individual men, so is it essential to the highest wellbeing of man as man. The hope upon which states, institutions, artists, painters, military men, politicians, rest is directed to objects within the sphere of sense and time. But man, as man, must look beyond sense and time. For man is confronted everywhere with the barrier which arrests or dissolves all earthly hopes; he sees death ever before him. Does all end with death? That is the question of questions; the greatest question that confronts man when he sets himself to think seriously about his place in the universe, about his real being, about his destiny. It is impossible altogether to put off the consideration of a point like this; it rises to life whenever there is a resurrection of serious thought. It is as fresh, as interesting, as full of unspeakable importance for this generation as it was for the last: it will be as much so for the next generation as for this. Science does not solve it; a materialised civilisation cannot bury it out of sight; time does not tell upon it: there it is,—this awful question awaiting us each and all—Whither am I going?

“What are you going to do?” said an elderly friend to a young man who was just entering upon life. “I hope,” was the answer, “to complete my education at the University.” “And what then?” “I shall learn a profession, and devote myself to it.” “And what then?” “I shall marry as soon as I can afford it.” “And what then?” “No doubt I shall have enough to do in educating and providing for my family.” “And what then?” “Well, of course, in time I shall grow to be an old man.” “And what then?” asked his questioner. “In time, I suppose, . . . I shall die.” “And what then?”

There was silence : the young man had never looked so far ahead as that.

Man needs an answer to that question, if the deepest springs of his being are to be really moved. And if we cast our eyes upon the forms of opinion which lie outside the Christian Church, what do we find ?

There is, of course, the materialist answer that all does end with death ; that man's higher being is but the vitality of his animal frame, and perishes with it, perishes utterly and for ever. But this answer does not really satisfy men in their better and more thoughtful moods. Why should they be haunted, possessed, as they are, by the idea, the instinct of a coming immortality ? why should this idea be so general, so importunate, as, upon the whole, it is ? If Descartes was right in arguing that the world-wide idea of God in the soul of man could only be explained by the fact of God's existence, is it not equally reasonable to argue that the idea of immortality, which is so general, points equally to the fact of our immortality as human beings ? How else are we to explain it ? Why should such a hope or apprehension, as the case may be, of existence after death, be so deep, so well-nigh universal ? A superstition which has no basis in fact has its limits in time and territorial sway. But whenever man has risen above the lowest stages of animalised life, the idea of a future, in some indistinct way, has dawned upon him, if only as a correlative of the idea of God. As our own Addison makes Cato in his soliloquy say :—

“It must be so: Plato, thou reasonest well,  
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
This longing after immortality ?  
Or whence this secret dread and inward horror  
Of falling into nought ? Why shrinks the soul  
Back on herself, and startles at destruction ?  
’Tis the Divinity that stirs within us,  
’Tis Heaven itself that points out an hereafter,  
And intimates eternity to man.”

This general impression or instinct of immortality has been taken to pieces. It has been traced sometimes to the idea that the soul is of itself indestructible, as being an uncompounded essence : sometimes, as by Goethe, to the profound conviction that mental and moral activity which has lasted up to the moment of dissolution, cannot be arrested by the death of man's outward husk, and must continue in some other form and sphere beyond it ; sometimes to the sense of justice, which



refuses to believe that a Moral Governor of the world will not provide a future in which to redress the terrible inequalities of our present state of being. But so long as the conviction does not rest upon some fact which is independent of our varying and shifting moods of thought and feeling, it is scarcely strong enough to govern conduct, and restrain passion, and invigorate the sense of duty, and make men embark in serious ventures. For this reason such convictions are only found in the old pagan world, in any tolerable degree of distinctness, among the cultivated classes. They scarcely influenced the great mass of persons, or they produced that depressed view of life of which we find traces in the literature which abounded in parts of Europe, simultaneously with the great outbreak of infidel opinion at the end of the last century. Life was failure: to have lived was a misfortune: moral apathy was common sense: moral or spiritual enthusiasm was abject fanaticism. Over such a generation the Psalmist's sentence might be written: "They lie in the hell like sheep, death gnaweth upon them, and the righteous shall have domination over them in the morning: their beauty shall consume in the sepulchre out of their dwelling."<sup>1</sup>

The man who has no clear belief in a future life may undoubtedly have, within some very restricted limits, a strong sense of duty. He may even persuade himself that this sense of duty is all the better and purer from not being bribed by the prospect of a future reward, or stimulated, as he would say, unhealthily, by the dread of future punishment. But, for all that, his moral life is fatally impoverished. It is not merely that he has fewer and feebler motives to right action: it is that he has a false estimate of his real place in the universe. He has forfeited, in the legitimate sense of the term, his true title to self-respect. He has divested himself of the bearing, the instincts, the sense of noble birth and high destiny which properly belong to him. He is like an heir to a throne who is bent on forgetting his lineage and his responsibilities in self-sought degradation. Man cannot, if he would, live with impunity only as a more accomplished kind of animal than the creatures around him. He is a child of eternity, and he cannot unmake himself. He cannot take up a position that abdicates or ignores his highest prerogatives without sooner or later sinking into degradations, which are in themselves his punishment.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlix. 14.



## II.

Man then needs a hope, resting on something beyond this scene of sense and time. And God has given him one, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Our Lord indeed taught, in the plainest language, the reality of a future life. "In My Father's house are many mansions : I go to prepare a place for you."<sup>1</sup> "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal."<sup>2</sup> "These shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous unto life eternal."<sup>3</sup> "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living : for all live unto Him."<sup>4</sup>

Passages of this kind from among the very Words of Christ might be multiplied : but in teaching that man would live after death, our Lord was only teaching what, with various degrees of distinctness, pagans and Jews had taught before Him. He contributed to the establishment of this truth in the deepest convictions of men, not merely many lessons taught in words, but a fact, palpable to the senses. When, after saying that He would rise from the grave, He rose, He broke the spell of the law of death. He made it plain, within the precincts of the visible world, that a world unseen and eternal awaits us hereafter. His Resurrection converted hopes, surmises, speculations, trains of inference, into strong certainties. "Because I live ye shall live also"<sup>5</sup> was a saying which faith, under the guidance of reason, would henceforth inscribe upon Christ's empty grave. For that He had risen was not a secret whispered to a few : it was a fact verified by the senses of five hundred witnesses : and established, in face of a jealous and implacable criticism, which would fain have silenced its eloquent protestation that there is a world beyond the grave, in which Christ is King.

Not that the fact of Christ's Resurrection could force itself upon reluctant minds, or rather upon reluctant wills. In the earliest ages, as now, there were expedients for evading its force. It was a trick of the disciples ; or it was a phantom apparition ; or it was the product of a woman's excited imagination ; or it was a prosaic transfer to the history of an individual of that which was true, but only true of the death-

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 2.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. vi. 20.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xxv. 46.<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xx. 38.<sup>5</sup> St. John xiv. 19.

less ideas which He taught to men. The Evangelical narrative, the convictions of the earliest Church, the moral strength of the Church, advancing through blood and suffering to the heights of a world-wide empire, resist these expedients, as inconsistent with fact, inconsistent with reason. St. Paul's argument that "if Christ be not risen, our labour is vain, your faith is also vain,"<sup>1</sup> is really an appeal to common sense. Is it probable, the Apostle suggests, that we Apostles should have ventured everything, that we should have surrendered everything, that we should be prepared to endure everything, for the sake of a faith, without having been careful to assure ourselves of the truth of the central fact on which it rests?

There are at least three forms of interest which might be accorded to such a fact as the Resurrection. The first, the interest of curiosity in a wonder, altogether at variance with the observed course of nature. This interest may exist in a high degree; observing and registering the fact, yet never for one moment getting beyond it. The second, the interest of active reason, which is satisfied that such a fact must have consequences and is anxious to trace them. This interest may lead a man to see that the Resurrection does prove the truth of Christianity; even though he may know nothing of the power of Christ's Blood and of Christ's Life, as a matter of experience. A third kind of interest is practical and moral. It is an effort to answer the question, What does the Resurrection of Christ say to me, mean for me? If it is true, if Christianity is true, what ought to be the effect on my thoughts, my feelings, my life? Now St. Peter answers that all should be invigorated by a living Hope. But then this absorbing moral interest does not come of ordinary powers of observation and reason, like the two earlier forms of interest. We are, says St. Peter, "begotten" unto it. It is no outcome of our original stock of common sense, though it does not contradict that common sense; it is the product of a Divine Breath, playing upon the soul, and giving it a new birth, a new capacity for life. Of this birth, the Father of souls is the Author, and His Eternal Spirit the instrument, and union with Christ the essence or effect. It does much else for us; but it does this among other things, and not least among them: it endows us with a living hope. Looking to the Rising Christ, we Christians live in the future even more than in the present: it is part of our new nature to do so, just as surely as it is

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 14.

natural to a pagan to be entirely engrossed with things of sense and time.

### III.

St. Peter calls this "hope" a lively, or living, one. What does he mean by this? There are within many a soul traces of powers, ideas, feelings, which once lived, but which have died away. We investigate them from time to time, like the buried ruins of Pompeii or Herculaneum. Every man in later life finds the soil of his mind more or less strewn with the husks of hopes which have ceased to live. Time and disappointment do their work: and we bury our earlier enthusiasms quietly away, as, one after another, they cease to burn within us. But a Christian's hope endures. Earthly disappointments do but force us to make more of it. The lapse of time does but bring us nearer to its object. It is not subject to those laws of decay which tell upon the strength and vitality of a merely human enthusiasm. The vigour of its life is in an inverse proportion to that of the decaying frame upon which years have done their work, and which is drawing onwards in its course towards the portals of the grave.

Surely, we can ask ourselves few questions so important as "Have I this hope?" If not, what is the real value of any other hopes I may have? They do not reach beyond the frontiers of time. They must fail, when the end draws near; they must be buried, utterly and for ever, in my grave. "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth: neither shall his pomp follow him."<sup>1</sup> A hope worth having is, as the Apostle says, "an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, that entereth within the veil."<sup>2</sup> Its object is throned beyond the narrow frontiers of this life; beyond the kingdom of change and death. Not to have this hope is to be living at random; it is to be drifting on towards eternity without a chart in hand, or a harbour in view. No cry for help can be too earnest, too piercing, if such is our case: nor, if we do cry, will it be in vain. And if we humbly trust that we have this hope, what are the tests of our possessing it?

A first test is that earthly things sit easily upon us. We are not uninterested in them: far from it. We know how much depends on our way of dealing with them. But, also,

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlix. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. vi. 19.

we are not enslaved by them. To have caught a real glimpse of the eternal is to have lost heart and relish for the things of time. To have the imperishable clearly in view is to perceive the insignificance of that which passes. A living hope of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, enables a Christian to understand life in its real proportions : what things were once a gain to him, those he accounts loss for Christ.<sup>1</sup>

A second test of our having this hope is a willingness to make sacrifices for it. We do not really cherish it till we have asked ourselves the question, 'What difference do my hopes of another world make in my daily life? What am I doing, what do I leave undone, that I should not leave undone or do, if I believed that all really ended at death? What changes would be made in my habits, occupations, daily modes of thought and feeling, if—to put a horrible supposition—I could awake to-morrow morning and find that Christ's conquest of the eternal world for me was a fable?' Depend upon it, Christians, the sincerity of our hopes may be exactly measured by the sacrifices which we have made, or which God knows us to be prepared to make, on behalf of them. He who ventures little hopes for little. He who has a heaven in view where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break not through or steal, lays up treasures in it,<sup>2</sup> and that he may do so, surrenders all that need be surrendered here, in order to secure them. He cuts off the right hand, he plucks out the right eye,<sup>3</sup> which offend him; that, albeit maimed and with one eye, he may yet enter heaven.

A third test is progressive efforts to prepare for the future life. "Every man that hath this hope in Him," says St. John, "purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure."<sup>4</sup> Heaven too, the home to which hope looks forward, has its atmosphere, its manners, its interests, its language; and they must be learnt, at least to a certain extent, by its future inhabitants, on earth. Worship is of such vast importance in the Christian life, because it is a continuous preparation for the future state revealed to hope; because it forms in us those habits, interests, enthusiasms, desires, which will then be not occasional but continuous. When we enter this Cathedral for prayer, we do well to say deliberately to ourselves: 'Now I am going to exercise

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iii. 7.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. vi. 20.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. v. 29, 30.<sup>4</sup> 1 St. John iii. 3.

a living hope ; I am going to speak to God, as I hope to speak to Him unceasingly hereafter.'

A last test is inward peace, and its accompaniment, habitual outward cheerfulness. A Christian may have his full share of anxieties, but at bottom he is always light-hearted. His soul has found its anchorage in Christ Crucified, Risen, Ascended, Glorified, Interceding. He wants no more. The events of life may tell hardly upon him : but they do not touch his real self, any more than the storm on the surface of the ocean can agitate the depths below. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee."<sup>1</sup>

Eternal Jesus, Who when Thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, didst open the kingdom of heaven to all believers, fix our eyes, we pray Thee, on our great inheritance, that, washed in Thy Blood, and sanctified by Thy Spirit, we may live indeed for that world whence we shall hereafter look back upon death as the gate of an existence which is really life.

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxvi 3.

## SERMON XIII.

### EASTER JOY.

PSALM XXX. 12.

*Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.*

HERE is described a change, complete, and more or less sudden, from sadness to joy. David has escaped a danger which had brought him very near to death; and now he is thankful and exultant. His words are in keeping with what Christians feel, as they pass from the last days of Holy Week into the first hours of Easter. If Easter is associated predominantly with any one emotion, it is with that of joy. When Mary Magdalene and the other Marys had heard the words of the angel of the Lord, "they departed quickly from the sepulchre, with fear and great joy."<sup>1</sup> When, on the evening of Easter Day, Jesus stood in the midst of the assembled disciples, and showed them His Hands and His Feet, their joy was too great for the steady exercise of their understanding: "they believed not for joy, and wondered."<sup>2</sup> In these first hours of ecstatic bewilderment, as St. John says, "the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Was it not His Own promise of a joy which would be beyond the reach of outward circumstance, that had now become true? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice"—that was the hour of Calvary—"and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy"<sup>4</sup>—that was to be the radiance of Easter. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow;

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xx. 20.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 40, 41.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xvi. 20.



but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”<sup>1</sup> And thus, ever since, the Church of Christ has laboured to make the Easter festival, beyond all others, the feast of Christian joy. All that nature and art could furnish has been summoned to express, so far as outward things may, this overmastering emotion of Christian souls worshipping at the tomb of their Risen Lord. All the deliverances of God’s ancient people, from Egypt, from Assyria, from Babylon, are but rehearsals of the great deliverance of all on the Resurrection morning; and each prophet and psalmist that heralds any of them, sounds in Christian ears some separate note of the Resurrection Hymn. “Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously;”<sup>2</sup> or, “He hath broken the gates of brass, and smitten the bars of iron in sunder;”<sup>3</sup> or, “The Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a giant refreshed with wine;”<sup>4</sup> or, “This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it;”<sup>5</sup>—these, and many other passages, referred originally to some event in Jewish history, and yet are felt to receive their highest fulfilment and interpretation when they are uttered by Christian hearts on the Easter festival. And this, the joy which fills the soul of the believing Church on Easter Day, has some sort of echo in the world outside; so that those who sit loosely to our faith and hope, and who worship rarely, if ever, before our altars, yet feel that good spirits are somehow in order on Easter morning. For their sakes, as for our own, let us try to take the emotion to pieces, as we find it in a Christian soul; let us ask why it is so natural for Christians to say, this day, with David, “Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.”

## I.

The first reason, then, for this Easter joy is the triumph and satisfaction enjoyed by our Lord Himself. Certainly it is now more than eighteen hundred years since He died and rose. But we Christians are well assured that He is alive; that He is reigning on His throne in heaven, yet also invisibly with us on earth, and perfectly well aware of all that is passing both within our souls and without them. Yes! eighteen centuries have gone; yet, year by year, we follow Him, step by step,

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvi. 21, 22.<sup>2</sup> Exod. xv. 21.<sup>3</sup> Ps. cvii. 16.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. lxxviii. 65.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. cxviii. 24.

through all the stages of His sufferings and death. We sympathise reverently with the awful sorrows of our Adorable Lord and Friend ; and thus we enter, in some far-off way, into the sense of triumph, unspeakable and sublime, which follows beyond it. It is His triumph ; that is the first consideration ; His triumph, Who was but now so cruelly insulted and tortured ; His, Whom they buffeted and spat upon, and mocked and derided, and nailed to the wood, and laid in the sepulchre. It is all over now ; His enemies have done their best or their worst ; and He has swept it all aside, since, now that the hour has come, by a single motion of His Majestic Will, He is risen. And we, as we kneel before Him, think, first of all, of Him. It is His joy which inspires ours ; it turns our heaviness into joy, and puts off our sorrow and girds us with gladness.

Do I say, This is the case ? Perhaps it were more prudent to say, that it ought to be. For in truth the habit of getting out of and forgetting our miserable selves in the absorbing sense of the beauty and magnificence of God, belongs rather to ancient than to modern Christianity. Few things are more striking in the early Christian mind, taken as a whole, than its power of escaping from self into the thought and Presence of God. To these old Christians God was all, man nothing, or wellnigh nothing. They delighted to dwell on everything that He had told them about Himself, about each one of His Attributes, each one of His acts, simply because it was His, and without reference to the question whether it had any or what bearing upon their own lives and need. Theirs was a disinterested interest in God ; and to them our Lord's Resurrection was, in the first place, of commanding moment, because it meant His glory and triumph, whatever else it might mean for them.

With us moderns the case is somewhat otherwise. We value God, if the truth must be spoken, at least in many cases, not for His Own sake, but for ours. Perhaps, without knowing it, we have drunk deeply into the subjective temper, as it is called, of our time ; the temper which assumes that truth only exists so far as we can measure it, or as it exists for us ; the temper which practically, like the old sophist in Plato, makes man the measure of all things. With us of to-day it is too often assumed that the human mind is the centre, not merely of human thought, but of universal being. And thus God, the one self-existent Cause of all that is, is banished to a distant point on the circumference of our imaginary universe. Men

carry this temper unconsciously into their religion. And thus our first question, in presence of a great Truth like the Resurrection, is too often, not, What is its intrinsic importance? but, What interest has it for me? Look at a modern hymn: it is, as a rule, full of man; full of his wants, his aspirations, his anticipations, his hopes, his fears; full of his religious self, if you will, but still of himself. But read an ancient hymn: it is, as a rule, full of God, of His awful Nature; of His wonderful Attributes; full of the Eternal Son, of His Acts, His Sufferings, His Triumph, His Majesty. Certainly ancient Christianity did justice to the needs and moods of the soul; just as in the Psalms we find the soul's several moods of hope and fear, of penitence and exultation, so abundantly provided for. But we often hear even religious people express something like impatience with the great Psalms, which describe God's relations with nature, or His dealings with His people Israel; an impatience grounded on the fact that they think those Psalms only of real interest which enable them to say something to God about themselves. Surely, my friends, we moderns have lost something, nay much, in this matter, by comparison with the early Church of Christ; and thus I may have said too much just now, when I took it for granted that the joy of our Lord would be our first reason for rejoicing on Easter Day. Be it yours to show that my misgiving is unwarranted. You know that pure sympathy with an earthly friend's happiness leaves altogether out of consideration the question whether it contributes anything to your own; and in like manner endeavour to say to-day to your Heavenly Friend: 'It is because Thou, Lord Jesus, hast vanquished Thine enemies, hast overcome death, and hast entered into Thy glory, that Thou hast turned my Lenten "heaviness into joy, and put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness."'

## II.

But, having said this, note, secondly, that Easter joy is inspired by the sense of confidence with which Christ's Resurrection from the dead invigorates our grasp of Christian truth.

The understanding, be sure, has its joy, no less than the heart; and a keen sense of intellectual joy is experienced when we succeed in resting truth, or any part of it, on a secure basis. This is what the old Roman poet meant by saying that the man was really happy who had attained to know the causes of

things. And no one who has been thrown into close relations with men engaged in the eager pursuit of any branch of knowledge, can mistake the depth and reality of this kind of satisfaction. The chemist who has at last explained the known effect of a particular drug, by laying bare, upon analysis, an hitherto undiscovered property in it; the historian who has been enabled to show that the conjecture of years rests on the evidence of a trustworthy document; the mathematician on whom has flashed the formula which solves some problem that has long haunted and eluded him; the anatomist who has been able to refer what he had hitherto regarded as an abnormal occurrence to the operation of a recognised law;—these men know what joy is. This joy of the understanding at coming into felt contact with some truth underlying that which it has hitherto grasped, wins for it a new vigour and buoyancy, enhances its present sense of life, and is full of hope and promise for the time to come.

Now, akin to the joy of students and workers is the satisfaction of a Christian when he steadily dwells on the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. During large tracts of time we Christians think naturally and mainly of truths or duties, which, however important, are not the foundations of other truths. The Christian Creed is like a tower which rears towards heaven its windows and pinnacles in successive stages of increasing gracefulness. We lavish our admiration first on this detail of it, and then on that; and, while we thus study and admire, we dwell continuously in its upper stories, till at last perhaps a grave question occurs or is suggested to us. What does it all rest upon? What is the foundation-fact on which this structure has been reared in all its audacious and fascinating beauty? What is the fact, if there be any, the removal of which would be fatal to the edifice? And the answer is that our Lord's Resurrection from the dead is one such fact. It is a foundation on which all truth in the Christian Creed, that is distinctively Christian, and not merely Theistic, really rests. Our Lord pointed to it as the certificate of His mission. He rebuked indeed the temper which made men ask whether He could show a sign of having a mission from above: but He granted the request. The prophet Jonah was the type of the Son of Man: "As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so would the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."<sup>1</sup> And

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xii. 40.

the earliest sermons of the Apostles were almost entirely concerned with Christ's Resurrection. As we read them in the Acts it might seem that the Resurrection was the only Christian doctrine. The prophecies which it fulfilled; the consequences to which it pointed; above all, the reality of the fact itself, of which those first preachers were witnesses: this was the subject of the earliest preaching of the Apostles of Christ. And why did they dwell so persistently on the Resurrection? Why did they not say more about our Lord's Atoning Death, or the power of His example, or the drift and character of His moral teaching, or the means of grace with which He has endowed His Church? Why, but because, before building the superstructure in the hearts of believers, it was necessary to lay the foundation deep and firm. If it was true that Christ had risen, then the faith of Christendom, in all its vast significance, would be seen, step by step, but surely, to follow; whereas, "if Christ be not risen," as said one of themselves, "our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain."<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

[Here followed a passage substantially identical with part of Sermon V.]

Here, then, in the Resurrection of Christ, we have a solid fact on which the Christian Faith securely rests, both as a whole, and in its most vital parts. Does our Lord say that hereafter we shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven?<sup>2</sup> If the speaker were a being whose life is conditioned as our own, such language could, at best, be regarded as an extravagant illusion. But if He really rose from the dead, He evidently is a Being of another order than we, and this and much more is possible. Does He speak of giving His Life as a ransom for many;<sup>3</sup> of His Blood being shed for the remission of sins?<sup>4</sup> This, again, would be unintelligible or intolerable in an ordinary man; but it is clear that the death of One Who resumed His Life after His Life had been wrung out of Him by a death of torture, may well have consequences beyond our calculation. Does He say that He and the Father are one thing;<sup>5</sup> that to have seen Him is to have seen the Father;<sup>6</sup> that all men should honour the Son—that is, Himself—even as they honour

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark xiv. 62.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xx. 28.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xxvi. 28.

<sup>5</sup> St. John x. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xiv. 9.



the Father ;<sup>1</sup> that unless men would eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, they would have no true life in them?<sup>2</sup> Ah ! what must have been the verdict of the human conscience upon such language as this, if the speaker, after an ignominious execution, had rotted in his grave ? Whereas, in view of the considerations which we have had before us, an Apostle exclaims that Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Resurrection from the dead.”<sup>3</sup>

Yes ; it is here, beside the empty tomb of the Risen Jesus, that Christian faith feels itself on the hard rock of fact ; here we break through the tyranny of matter and sense, and rise with Christ into the immaterial world ; here we put a term to the enervating alternation of guesses and doubts which prevails elsewhere, and we reach the frontier of the absolutely certain ; here, as we kneel in deep thankfulness, and the Christian Creed in all its beauty and in all its coherent truth opens out before us, we hear, it may be, as did His beloved Apostle, His Voice from heaven, “I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.”<sup>4</sup> And we can but answer, Truly, Lord Jesus, by Thy Resurrection Thou hast turned my heaviness into joy : Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.

### III.

But there is a third reason for Easter joy, which must be briefly touched on, before we close.

As a man gets on in life, he finds his deepest human interests transferred, one after another, to a sphere beyond that of sense and time. One after another they are withdrawn, the friends of our childhood, the friends of our manhood, the friends of our riper years. One after another they reach the brink ; there is hesitation, it may be, perhaps, for a moment ; it seems that they might return. But the hour strikes ; and they part. One such<sup>5</sup> we cannot but call to mind to-day, since he was with us last Easter, and even at our last great festival in this Cathedral. And, indeed, he had been engaged in its service for a much longer period than any of us, his colleagues and brethren ; for some half-century at the least. Never again in this life shall we see that well-known form, bowed down of

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 23.    <sup>2</sup> Ibid. vi. 53.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. i. 4.    <sup>4</sup> Rev. i. 18.

<sup>5</sup> The Rev. J. V. Povah, Minor Canon of St. Paul's, and Rector of St. Anne and St. Agnes.



late by advancing years and weakness ; never again shall we meet that perfectly courteous and kindly welcome which be-tokened so many a high Christian grace of soul and character. Long will he live in the affectionate memory of his brethren, and of many who worshipped constantly before this altar ; but he has joined—with how many others—the great company of the dead. The company of the dead ! All here remains as it was, at least for a while ; the home in which they dwelt, the haunts they frequented, the enterprises in which they were engaged, the faces they loved. All these remain ; but they—they are gone. They have disappeared beyond recall ; their bodies indeed, we know, lie beneath the sod, a prey to corrup-tion and the worm ; but their souls, their spirits, themselves, that which flashed through the eye, that which was felt in the manner, in the tone of the voice, as well as in the thought and action,—where is it ? Has it then become absorbed into some sea of life, in which all personality, and with it all conscious-ness, perishes ? Or has it sunk back, after a momentary flicker, into an abyss of nothing, now that the material frame-work, whose energy it was, is withdrawn ?

There is no occasion here to review the arguments by which wise and good men, living in pagan darkness, but making the most of such light as reason and conscience could give them, have attained to belief in the immortality of the soul. We know that their guess or speculation, whichever we deem it, is a solemn certainty. But we know also that it is only half the truth. Man is not merely a spiritual being ; he is also an animal organism : and if his spiritual part were to be isolated for an eternity ; wrenched away for ever from the senses and framework, in which it has been lodged since the first moment of its existence ; then man would be no longer the same being ; he would be unrecognisable even by himself. For the spirit strikes its roots deep into the animal organism ; indeed this intimate relation between them is the element of truth on which materialism fixes, that it may thence infer its degrading falsehood that man has no purely spiritual being at all. And thus it is that when the Gospel brought life and immortality to light,<sup>1</sup> it did this thoroughly. It unveiled the immortality of man in his completeness ; the immortality of his spiritualised but still-existing body, as well as the immortality of his soul.

We may then hope to meet our friends, those whom we have loved long since and lost a while not as formless, unrecognis-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 1 10.

able shades, but with the features, the expressions which they wore on earth. "For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with Him."<sup>1</sup> His Resurrection is the model as well as the warrant of our own. Nay more: "All men shall rise with their bodies."<sup>2</sup> In that future world there will, we know, be shadows, dark, unpenetrable, unchanging. But there will also be joy unspeakable and full of glory.<sup>3</sup> And if they whom we call the dead know anything of what is passing here on earth; if, as has been supposed by great Christian divines, they see in the Eternal Word, as in a mirror, the reflection of all that happens in this world of sense, from which they have been separated by death, then we may believe that the Easter Festival is for them too, in whatever measure, an occasion of rejoicing, and that the happiness of the Church on earth is responded to from beyond the veil. To them, at any rate, our thoughts involuntarily turn, in these moments of rare and thankful joy; they live again now in our memories, though years should have passed since they were withdrawn from our sight; and, as we look forward to the hour when we, unworthy but repentant, through redeeming grace and mercy, shall join them; and beneath the throne of our Risen Lord shall again behold the features which we have loved best on earth, can we but exclaim, with deep thankfulness, 'Thou, O Jesus, hast by Thy Resurrection "turned my heaviness into joy: Thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness"?''

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14.<sup>2</sup> Athan. Creed.<sup>3</sup> 1 St. Pet. i. 8.

## SERMON XIV.

### THE UNDYING ONE.

ROM. VI. 9.

*Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more.*

EASTER Day is a day on which the best Christians are hardly in a mood for sermons. Their hearts are full of joy, and they come to church, as they would go to a wedding ; to make their congratulations ; to utter their hymns of joy and praise to the King of kings on the anniversary of His great victory. Their hearts say more to them than any fellow-man can possibly say ; and much of what their hearts tell them cannot well be rendered into human language. They wish to be left alone with their joy : sermons, they say, are very well in seasons and on days of penitence : but when the heart is bursting with triumphant emotion, sermons either lag behind our feelings or are out of harmony with them. And for this kind of reason, I suppose, it has been said that a sermon on Easter Day requires an apology.

It is not my business to dispute the existence of a state of mind such as this. There are Christians, no doubt, who in some sort, in varying degrees, even while here on earth, anticipate heaven. They know what may be known about invisible things ; about God, about conscience, about the future. They enjoy not merely light, but love. They feel as angels feel rather than as men ; and human voices or human experiences can do, for such as they are, little or nothing. We need not doubt that such Christians exist ; but the immense majority of us, you and I, are on a very different level. We are the children of time all over ; at least as yet. We are entangled in difficulties, greater or less ; we have to battle with weakness in our wills and with darkness in our understandings. For us, too, in our measure, Easter is a day of joy : we catch the inspiration which moves higher and brighter

souls around us ; we keep pace, as we can, with the loftier feeling of the time. But, at least for us, it is a great help to have definite points to fall back upon as the reasons for our joy : and, with a view to this, we cannot do better than place ourselves under St. Paul's guidance this afternoon, in those words which are so familiar to us from childhood, as forming part of the Easter anthem, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."

In these words are two assertions which lie at the bottom of all Easter satisfaction. First, The reality of the Resurrection ; "Christ being raised from the dead." Secondly, The perpetuity of Christ's Risen Life : "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."

### I.

The Resurrection then asserts a truth which is by no means always written legibly for all men on the face of nature. It tells us that the spiritual is higher than the material ; that in this universe spirit counts for more than matter. There are no doubt abstract arguments which go to show that this is the case. But the Resurrection is a palpable fact, which assures us that the ordinary laws of animal existence may be altogether set aside in obedience to a higher spiritual interest. It was, we all know, no natural force like that of growth which raised our Lord Jesus Christ from His grave. And such a fact as this is worth much more than abstract arguments. It can always be fallen back upon, when we are in no mood for speculative thought ; and it leaves less room for mistake or self-deception.

"Christ being raised from the dead." The Resurrection is not merely an article of the Creed : it is a fact in human history. That our Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before all worlds is also an article of the Christian faith. But it has nothing to do with human history, and it cannot be shown to have taken place, like any event, say in the life of Julius Cæsar, by the reputed testimony of eye-witnesses. It belongs to another sphere ; it is believed on account of the proved trustworthiness of Him Who has taught us this truth about His Own Eternal Person. But that Christ rose from the dead is a fact which depends on the same sort of testimony as any event in the life of Cæsar ; with this difference, that no one ever thought it worth while to risk his life in order to maintain that Cæsar defeated Vercingetorix or Pompey. Our Lord, as you know, was seen five times on the day that He rose from

the dead. Mary Magdalene saw Him in the garden.<sup>1</sup> She saw Him again, with the other Mary and Salome, when He allowed them to hold Him by the Feet, and to worship Him.<sup>2</sup> At a later hour in the day He appeared to Peter.<sup>3</sup> In the afternoon He discovered Himself to Cleopas and another disciple who were walking on the Emmaus road.<sup>4</sup> In the evening He was with the Apostles, excepting Thomas.<sup>5</sup> He showed them His Hands and His Feet, as those of the Crucified; He ate before them; He gave them the power of remitting and retaining sins. And after this first day, six separate appearances are recorded; while it is implied that they were only a few of those which actually occurred. After the interval of a week, He appeared again to the Eleven. Thomas then was with them; and He convinced Thomas that He was really risen.<sup>6</sup> On another occasion they saw Him on a mountain in Galilee.<sup>7</sup> On another He was seen by five hundred persons, more than one half of whom were still living when St. Paul described the fact to the Corinthians.<sup>8</sup> On another He appeared to St. Peter, St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew, St. James the Great, and St. John, with two others, on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias.<sup>9</sup> On another He had a private interview with St. James the Less.<sup>10</sup> Once more, He was with all the Apostles at Jerusalem, before He led them out to Bethany, gave them His last promises and benediction, and went up to heaven before their eyes.<sup>11</sup>

And when He was gone, His Apostles went forth to do and teach, no doubt, a great deal else, but especially, they went forth as "witnesses of His Resurrection."<sup>12</sup> That was a fact of which they were certain; they were prepared to attest its truth, if need were, with their blood. We learn from the Acts of the Apostles that the earliest Christian preaching was a constant assertion that Christ had really risen. The reality of His Resurrection was so certain that it emboldened and indeed forced His followers to address themselves to the conversion of the world. "We cannot but speak the things," they said, "which we have seen and heard."<sup>13</sup>

If the testimony which can be produced in proof of the Resurrection concerned only a political occurrence, or a fact of

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xvi. 9; St. John xx. 11-18.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 34.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 13-35.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 36-43; St. John xx. 19-25.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 26-31.

<sup>7</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 16-20.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

<sup>9</sup> St. John xxi. 1, 2.

<sup>10</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 7.

<sup>11</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 50, 51.

<sup>12</sup> Acts i. 22; iv. 33.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 20.

natural history witnessed eighteen centuries ago, nobody would think of denying its cogency. Those who do reject the truth of the Resurrection quarrel, for the most part, not with the proof that the Resurrection occurred, but with the supposition that such a thing could happen under any circumstances. No proof would satisfy them ; because they have made up their minds that the thing cannot be. Certainly, on the face of it, the Resurrection is a miracle ; nay, we may well say, it is the greatest of Christian miracles. As such it is unwelcome to those who make their limited personal experience of the physical world the measure of all spiritual as well as physical truth. Look, they say, at the fixed order of nature : day after day, year after year, it is what, within our memories, it always has been. The day waxes and wanes ; the seasons follow each other ; the apparent caprices of nature are, upon closer observation, more and more easily referred to the empire of law ; the life of every animal obeys a fixed order from birth to death ; and man, he too, however he may flatter himself, is no exception to the general rule ; he too obeys this universal order ; whether he will or no, he obeys, alike in life and in death, those physical laws which govern the course of animal existence. So that, when man dies, he lies down to mingle his body with the dust for good and all ; he does not, so far as we see, break the bonds of death. It is the fixed order of nature.

The fixed order of nature ! Surely, brethren, we in this age are, at least as much as our less scientific forefathers, the slaves of phrases ! The fixed order of nature, you say. Fixed, I ask, by whom or by what ? By some fated necessity, do you say ? But you yourselves, out of the experience of that existence which minute by minute you enjoy, can dispose of this phrase about a fixed order. You know that you can speak, move, act, or refrain from acting, moving, speaking, as, minute by minute, you will, and without any allegiance whatever to a supposed necessity. This is a fact within your experience : and what you know about yourselves to be experimentally true, you reasonably think may well be true, on a much greater scale, of beings higher than yourselves, of the highest Being of all. For that such a Being exists, as the Cause of all else, nature itself assures you by its existence ; and that He is not a mindless cause, but an ordering and disposing Intelligence—I do not forget recent attempts to set aside the argument from design—the order and symmetry of nature assure you too. If then you believe in God, you confess that the order of nature is



fixed not by a necessity or a fate, but by a Will which can at pleasure innovate upon or reverse it. He Who made life and nature what they are, could have made, and can make them otherwise. The power to work miracles is implied in the Power Which created nature. Miracles, to say the least, are not antecedently incredible for any rational believer in God.

‘God can work them,’ you say ; ‘but will He ? Are not miracles a libel upon the wisdom and far-sightedness of God ? How should the All-providing Mind have to supply deficiencies ? How should the Perfect Wisdom consent to break in upon the settled order of His work ? God in creation is the Supreme Engineer : it is only the unskilful workman who, having set his machine in motion, has to thrust in his hand in order to correct some defect, or to communicate some new impulse for which no provision was made originally.’

Here you run a risk of manufacturing argument out of mere metaphor. To say that God, in creation, is an Engineer or an Artist, is a very pardonable phrase. Within certain narrow limits it expresses a truth about His relation to the universe. It reminds us that all the resources and provisions of nature are due to His contriving Mind. But such an expression must not be pressed so as to obscure or deny other, and higher, truths about God, and about His work. The universe is something more than a machine : since it contains not merely matter but minds ; not merely inanimate masses, governed by rules which they unconsciously obey, but free spirits, able consciously to yield or to refuse obedience to the true law of their being. And God is much greater than a Supreme Engineer. He is, before all things, a Moral Governor ; He is a Father. His first care is for His intelligent offspring : and the universe of matter was framed not for its own sake, but for the rational beings who were to tenant it. If no such being as man had been created, miracle might have been superfluous. The universe might then well have been nothing more than a perfect machine, admitting of no interference, for any cause whatever, with its ordinary working. But if the education, the improvement, the rescuing from darkness and from evil, of a created rational mind or soul be God’s noblest purpose in creation, then, if we believe Him to be Wise and Good, as well as Almighty, we shall expect Him to make the world of matter instruct and improve us, by deviating, if need be, from its accustomed order, as well as by observing it. No one who considers carefully what a mind endowed with freedom of

choice is, and how various is the discipline and teaching which it needs, will say lightly that it needs no lights or aids to its true perfection and development, but such as an unvarying order of nature can supply.

We may indeed go further than this. The order which is observable in the natural world teaches no doubt a great and precious lesson to the man who already has a firm faith in the Living God ; it teaches him that order is a law of the Divine Mind. But for thousands upon thousands of human beings, who have indistinct and fluctuating ideas of God, in all countries and in all generations, and not by any means least in our own, the order of nature paralyses the spiritual sense. Perhaps, if it were possible to watch a fellow-creature continuing undeviatingly a single movement during a period of twenty years, we should come to look at him also as a machine which worked unconsciously, instead of as a free agent who might at any moment hold his hand. And undoubtedly men whose minds, or rather whose imaginations, are controlled mainly by impressions derived from sense ; who mark how regular God's work is, how undeviating ; and who instinctively presume that it must always be what it has hitherto been ;—such men gradually come to think of this visible scene of things as the whole universe of being. They drop out of mind that more wonderful world beyond it ; they forget Him Who is the King of this world as well as of that. Nay ; let us own that there are times in the lives of many of us when the physical world lies like a weight, or like a nightmare, heavy upon our thoughts ; when we long for some higher promise of blessedness and perfection than any which a fixed order of nature can give ; when we would fain rise in spirit beyond this material sphere,—

“ But still the wall impassable  
 Bars us around with sensual bond ;  
 In vain we dive for that beyond ;  
 Yet traverse o'er and o'er the bound  
 Walking on the unseen profound.  
 Like flies, which on my window pane  
 Pace up and down, again, again,  
 And though they fain would break away  
 Into th' expanse of open day,  
 They know not why, are travelling still  
 On the glass fence invisible :  
 So dwell our thoughts with the unseen  
 Yet cannot pass the bourne between.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Williams's *Baptistery*, vol. i. p. 161.

This, then, is the happiness, which is bestowed on many a human mind by the fact of Christ's Resurrection. It breaks down the iron wall of uniformity which goes so far to shut out God. It tells us that matter, and the orderly arrangement of matter, is not the governing principle of the universe. It assures us that matter is controlled by Mind ; that there is a Being, a Will, to Which matter can offer no effective resistance ; that He is not bound by the laws of the universe ; that He is their master. God had said this before to men who had ears to hear and eyes to see. But He never said it so clearly as in the Resurrection of our Lord. If ever there was a case which might be expected to warrant summary interference with the common order of the world on the part of a moral God, here was one. When Jesus died on Calvary, the purest of lives seemed to the eye of sense to have ceased to be. The holiest of doctrines appeared to have died away upon the air, amid the blasphemies which raged at the foot of the Cross. Apart from the question who the Sufferer was, there was the question whether a righteous God did really reign on earth and in heaven. And the Resurrection was an answer to that question. It was the finger of God visibly thrust down amid the things of sense ; disturbing their usual order ; bidding matter bend itself to proclaim the supremacy of spirit ; bidding brute human force, as well as physical order, own the superiority of goodness ; bidding us men know and feel that the truths which Christ has taught us about God and about the soul are higher and deeper than any which are written on the face of nature. Christ has risen. "This is the day which the Lord hath made : let us rejoice and be glad in it."<sup>1</sup>

## II.

But to-day's festival is also significant as commemorating the beginning of an Undying Life. The Resurrection was not an isolated miracle, done and over, leaving things as they had been before. The Risen Christ is not like Lazarus ; marked off from others by having visited the realms of death, but knowing that he must again ere long be a tenant of the grave. Christ rises for eternity : "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." His Risen Body is made up of flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii. 24.

But It has superadded qualities. It is so spiritual that It can pass through closed doors without collision or disturbance. It is beyond the reach of those causes which slowly or swiftly bring down our bodies to the dust. Throned in the heavens now, as during the forty days on earth, It is endowed with the beauty and glory of an eternal youth ;—"Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more."

Nor is this, in itself, a new miracle. The real miracle, perhaps, was that the sinless Christ should have died at all. Death was an innovation upon the true conditions of His existence ; and the Resurrection was but a return to His rightful and normal immortality. Let us recall the truth which, within our limited range of experience, we may verify for ourselves, namely, that bodily pain, disease, death, came at first, as they often come now, to man in the train of the disease and death of man's spiritual nature. Adam died, because he sinned.<sup>1</sup> If Adam had not sinned, he would not have died. Men point, I know, to the presence of disease and death among the lower creatures. But, not to enter upon the difficult question of their relation to the Fall, who shall say that these creatures too may not be under the same law of pain following upon such a measure of wrong-doing as their natures are capable of ? And if we are told of fossil human remains, of a much higher antiquity than that of the Adam of Genesis, it may be observed that, supposing the fact to be certain, it is consistent with the Revealed Account to hold that, between the original act of creation, and the present outfit of this our planet, ages upon ages may have elapsed during which the earth may have been peopled by races like our own, who had their period of probation, and finally passed away in some great geological catastrophe. In any case, what we say is that "by one man," of our present race, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."<sup>2</sup> But when the Second Head of our race appeared, cut off from the entail of corruption by His supernatural birth of a Virgin Mother, and exhibiting in His Life absolute conformity to eternal Moral Law, He was, by the terms of His Nature, exempt from the law of death. Therefore He died, not as a matter of course, but by violence. He consented, for the sake of others, to undergo the violence which was to kill Him. In His case, death was a momentary innovation upon the true law of being. "I am," He says, "the Living One, and I became dead, and behold, I

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 17; iii. 17-19; Rom. v. 12; 1 Cor. xv. 21.      <sup>2</sup> Rom. v. 12.

am alive for evermore.”<sup>1</sup> God loosed the pains of death because it was impossible that He should be holden of it.<sup>2</sup> And therefore when He had paid the mighty debt which the human family, represented by because impersonated in Him, owed to the deeply-wronged Righteousness of God, Life resumed its suspended sway in Him as in its Prince and Fountain. “Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more.”

Now observe how the perpetuity of the Life of the Risen Jesus is the guarantee of the perpetuity of the Christian Church. Alone among all forms of society which bind men together, the Church of Christ is insured against utter dissolution. When our Lord was born, the civilised world was almost entirely comprised within the Roman Empire. That vast social power might well have appeared, as it did appear to the men of our Lord’s day, destined to last for ever. Since then the Roman Empire has as completely vanished from the earth as if it never had been. Other kingdoms and dynasties have risen up and have in turn gone their way. Nor is there any warrant or probability that any one of the states or forms of civil government which exist at present will always last. And there are men who tell us that the Kingdom of Christ is no exception to the rule ; that it too has seen its best days and is passing. We Christians know that they are wrong ; that whatever else may happen, one thing is impossible ; the complete effacement of the Church of Jesus Christ. And what is our reason for this confidence ? It is because we Christians know that Christ’s Church, although having likeness to civil societies of men in her outward form and mien, is unlike them inwardly and really. She strikes her roots far and deep into the World Invisible. She draws strength from sources which cannot be tested by our political or social experience. Like her Lord, she has meat to eat that men know not of.<sup>3</sup> For indeed she is endowed with the Presence of Christ’s Own Undying Life. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”<sup>4</sup> Christ’s superiority to the assaults of death is the secret of His Church’s immortality : our confidence in the perpetuity of the Church is only one form of our faith in the unfailing Life of the Risen Jesus.

Certainly, although the Church of Christ is insured against dissolution, she is not insured against vicissitudes, not even against corruption, more or less extensive. Her Lord is

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 24.

<sup>3</sup> St. John iv. 32.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 20.



Divine : but the beings who compose her are human. She has not always triumphed : she has through weakness fallen back before an impure fanaticism like Mohammedanism, as in North Africa and Western Asia. She has been corrupted, as we know too well, sometimes by large and unwarranted additions to the original Creed of Christendom ; sometimes by forgetfulness of truths which were constantly on the lips of Apostles and Martyrs. And upon corruption, division has followed, so that she no longer presents a united front to the powers of evil. And there have been times when it has seemed as if the world was right, and the Church was on the point of disappearance from among men ; so great has been the weakness or the corruption of her representatives. To say that she would perish would have been reasonable if she had been only a human society, founded by some human genius, who had passed away. That which is so striking in her history, making it unlike that of any other society whatever, is the power of self-restoration—so men term it—which she has again and again developed, partially or as a whole. The tendency to dissolution has clearly been arrested by an inward Influence against which ordinary circumstances and causes could not prevail. What is this but the presence of Him Who, being raised from the dead, dieth no more ? And who shall forecast the future ? She may or may not, here or elsewhere, enjoy the friendship of civil governments ; she may be welcomed in high places or persecuted in catacombs. This only is certain :—she will exist while the world shall last. “ God is in the midst of her, therefore shall she not be removed : God shall help her, and that right early. The heathen make much ado, and the kingdoms are moved : but God hath showed His voice, and the earth shall melt away.”<sup>1</sup>

It may indeed be said, ‘ Why should I rejoice on Easter Day in the perpetuity of the Church ? Why should I grieve at her failure, if my personal Christian life remained ? To me Christianity is not a political or ecclesiastical, but a personal matter ; and I cannot affect such enthusiasm for the institution which only embodies and transmits it.’ My brethren, if you hold this language, you do not yet know what it is, in the fulness and reality of the term, to be a Christian. Your isolated, or as you call it, your “ personal ” Christianity, is not the Christianity of the New Testament. If one thing is clear in that blessed Book, it is that Christ came to found a Divine Society, and that

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlv. 5, 6.



the life of Christians comprises duties to, and privileges intimately bound up with that Society. What ! is it nothing to be welcomed into a vast association of souls, extending through so many centuries, so many countries, reaching up into the world invisible, reaching from our homes and hearths to the very throne of Christ ? Is it nothing to have a home and refuge for the solitary spirit, where we again find father and mother, and brother and child, who in the order of nature may have passed away ? Is the endurance of this Church of God a matter of indifference to any who have felt its place in the Divine counsels ; to any who have known what it is to have come unto Mount Sion, and to the city of the Living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, and to Jesus ?<sup>1</sup> I trow not. Glorious things are spoken of thee, thou city of God ; because thou art the home of saints, the home of angels, the home—so an Apostle teaches—of the Living Christ ; because, as in thy chequered story of shame and honour, of failure and victory, thou traversest the centuries, thou dost always bear with thee, in thy assured and indestructible vitality, the certificate of thy Lord's deathless Life.

### III.

Lastly, the great event of this day reveals the secret, as it displays the model, of perseverance in the life of godliness. Christ risen from death, Who dieth no more, is the model of our new life in grace. I do not mean that absolute sinlessness is attainable by any Christian. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>2</sup> But at least faithfulness in our intentions ; avoidance of known sources of danger ; escape from presumptuous sins ; innocence, as the Psalmist has it, of the great offence :<sup>3</sup> these things are possible. And they are necessary. Lives which are made up of alternate recovery and relapse : recovery perhaps during Lent, and swift relapse after Easter ; or even lives lived, as it were, with one foot in the grave, without any strong vitality, with feeble prayers, with half-indulged inclinations, with weaknesses which may be physical, but which a regenerate will should away with ; lives risen from the dead, yet without any seeming promise of endurance, what would St. Paul say of them ? "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." Just as

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 22-24.

<sup>2</sup> 1 St. John i. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xix. 13.

He left His tomb on Easter morning, once for all, so should the soul, once risen, be dead indeed unto sin. There must be no hovering about the sepulchre, no treasuring the grave-clothes, no secret hankering after the scent and atmosphere of the guilty past. If any of you who hear me humbly hope that you have by God's grace during this Lent attained to a spiritual resurrection; if in your case the words have been fulfilled, "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear shall live;"<sup>1</sup> then, be well assured that you have great need to see that you persistently set your affections on things above; that you desire passionately to live as those who are alive from the dead, "yielding your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."<sup>2</sup>

Depend on it, Christians, the Risen Life of Jesus tells us what our own new life should be. Not that God, having by His grace raised us from death, forces us whether we will or no to live on continuously. That great company of associated souls, which we call the Church, has indeed received from the King of kings a charter of perpetuity. But to no mere section of the Universal Body, and much more to no single soul on this side the grave, is it said that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against" it. Judas, after sharing that Divine companionship, may sell his Master if he wills to do so.<sup>3</sup> Demas, after his friendship with St. Paul, may forsake him at pleasure, through love of this present world.<sup>4</sup> The Galatians, among whom Christ has been evidently set forth crucified, may yet be bewitched by the fascinations of a plausible falsehood.<sup>5</sup> Paul himself may for a moment tremble, lest having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway.<sup>6</sup>

No force is put upon us; no man is carried up to heaven mechanically if he prefers to go downwards, or even does not sincerely desire to ascend. God allows us to employ that freedom of choice, in which our peril and our dignity as men consists, against ourselves, against Himself, if we choose to do so.

But how, you ask, can we rejoice in our Risen Lord, if we are so capable, in our weakness, of being untrue to His example? I answer, because that Life is the strength as well as the model of our own. "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up

<sup>1</sup> St. John v. 25.<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 13.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 14, 15.<sup>4</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 10.<sup>5</sup> Gal. iii. 1.<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.

Christ from the dead shall likewise quicken your mortal bodies, by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.”<sup>1</sup> The Risen Christ in us is “the hope of glory.”<sup>2</sup> And God gives us His grace, not to withdraw it, but to continue it to us, if we will not resist Him and sin it away. “If any man love Me, My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.”<sup>3</sup> “He that eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him.”<sup>4</sup> “No man,” says our Lord of the elect, “is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand.”<sup>5</sup> “Who,” asks St. Paul, “shall separate us from the love of Christ?”<sup>6</sup> Plainly God desires our salvation ; He gives us, in and for the sake of His Blessed Son, all necessary grace ; but it is for us to say whether we will respond to His bounty.

Pray to-day, brethren, then, in the spirit of this text, that at least you may persevere, in anything you have learnt of the life of God. Perseverance is a grace, just as much as faith, or hope, or charity. The secret strength of perseverance, is a share in the Glorified Life of Jesus. Perseverance may be, it will be, won by prayer for union with our Risen Saviour. Say to yourselves with the Psalmist, “It is good for me to hold me fast by God.”<sup>7</sup> Cling to the Risen Lord, by entreaties which twine themselves round His Person ; by Sacraments, the revealed points of vital contact with His Human Nature ;<sup>8</sup> by obedience and works of merey, through which, as He says Himself, you abide in His love.<sup>9</sup> Invigorate your feeble life, again and again, by that Divine Manhood which, reigning on the throne of heaven, can never more sink into the grave ; and then, not in your own strength, but in His, “likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 11.<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 27.<sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 23.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. vi. 56.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. x. 29.<sup>6</sup> Rom. viii. 35.<sup>7</sup> Ps. lxxiii. 27.<sup>8</sup> St. John vi. 56, 57.<sup>9</sup> Ibid. xv. 8-10.<sup>10</sup> Rom. vi. 11.

## SERMON XV.

### THE DAY OF DAYS.

PSALM CXVIII. 24.

*This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

WHAT is the high day to which the author of this verse refers ? It is hard to say, at least with certainty. Possibly it was the day on which the foundation stone of the new Temple was laid, after the return from Babylon. More probably it was the day on which this new Temple was consecrated to the service of God. Less probably it was the Feast of Tabernacles. In any case, it was a great historical occasion, or a festival of the first class of importance.

In our Lord's time the whole of the hundred and eighteenth Psalm was applied to the Messiah by the Jewish interpreters. Christ was the Stone, refused by the builders of Israel, but afterwards made the Head of the corner.<sup>1</sup> His was the welcome, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord ;" to Him was addressed the prayer, "Hosanna, save, I pray,"<sup>2</sup> as on Palm Sunday, by the Jewish multitude. Thus it was very natural for the Christian Church to find in the words, "This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it," an application to our Lord Jesus Christ. What was the day in His Life which He made His Own, beyond all others ? Not His Birthday ; for that meant His entrance on a life of sorrows. Not His Ascension day ; for that was the closing scene of a triumph already achieved. Not His Transfiguration day ; it was a momentary flash of glory in a career of pain. Not the day of His Crucifixion ; it was a great day for a ruined world, but for Him it marked the

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxi. 42 ; cf. Ps. cxviii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxi. 9 ; cf. Ps. cxviii. 25.

lowest stage of humiliation and of woe. The Day of days in the Life of Christ was the day of His Resurrection. It reflected a new glory on the day of His Birth. It witnessed a triumph of which the Ascension was but a completion. It was to the Transfiguration what the sunrise is to the earliest dawn. It poured a flood of light and meaning on Calvary itself ; and showed that what took place there was not simply the death-scene of an innocent Sufferer, but a Sacrifice which would have power with God to the end of time.

Something of this kind is what was felt by the old Christians about Easter Day ; and as it was the greatest day in the Life of Jesus Christ, so for them it was the greatest day in the whole year. It was the day of days ; it was the Lord's Own Day ; it was the queen of festivals. Every Lord's Day in the year was a weekly feast of Christ's rising from the dead ; on Easter Day, the force and meaning of all these Lord's Days were gathered into one consummate expression of joy and praise. "This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it." Easter should provoke a joy in Christian hearts, greater than any event in our private lives ; greater than any in the world's public history ; greater than any other even in the Life of our Lord Himself. This is the immemorial feeling and sense of Christendom ; but why should it be so ? why has Easter, why has the Resurrection, this extraordinary claim on the buoyancy of the Christian heart ?

## I.

The joy of Easter, then, first of all, is the joy of a great reaction ; a reaction from anxiety and sorrow. So it was at the time of Christ's Resurrection. The Apostles had been crushed by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. They could not have imagined beforehand that One so popular, so powerful, so gifted, would die like a malefactor, amid the execrations of the populace, and be buried away out of sight. They had "trusted that it was He Who should have redeemed Israel."<sup>1</sup> Their disappointment, their despondency, their anguish, were exactly proportioned to their earlier hopes. And, as is the case in the life of feeling, one deep answered to another. When He was in His grave, all seemed over ; and when He appeared, first to one, and then to another, on the day of His Resurrection, they could not keep their feelings of

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 21.

welcome and delight,—traversed though these were by a sense of wondering awe,—within anything like bounds. “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.”<sup>1</sup> It is not often that we are able to picture to ourselves what that joy of theirs must have been. But let us try to do so, by imagining a case which may easily suggest itself just now. Let us suppose that it were consistent with the present Will of God that any of those brave men who sank beneath the waves just a month ago, in the *Eurydice*, could, instead of waiting for the general Resurrection, rise now from their watery shrouds; that they could enter the homes which were awaiting their return, and which are now plunged in sorrow; that they could speak to a wife, to a mother, to a sister, some words of reassurance and peace. What would be the measure of the joy of such a meeting as that? It would be exactly proportioned to the anguish which followed the first announcement that the vessel had been lost; an anguish which has been deepening ever since. It would be an exulting rebound of feeling to which nothing in ordinary life is at all parallel. Yet it would be only a distant likeness of the joy which the Apostles experienced on Easter Day. No one, whom his friends mourn as among the brave men who died on that Sunday afternoon, can have been, to those who mourn him, what Jesus was to the Twelve, or to the Marys, or to His Own Blessed Mother; they knew that He had died by a death of studied pain and shame, to which nothing in the sudden sinking of a vessel at sea is in any way comparable. Their joy at seeing Him corresponded to the agony which had preceded it; the rebound was proportioned to the recoil. For them, assuredly, in words which the Church applies to Easter, “the winter is past; the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of the birds is come.”<sup>2</sup> Nature, in her yearly resurrection from the grave of winter, might fitly reflect the exulting joy with which nature’s Lord was greeted by His servants on His return from the realms of death.

And this joy of the first disciples is repeated every year in the greatest feast of the Christian Church. Those who have felt the sorrow feel the joy. Those who have entered into Christ’s sufferings, and their own sins as the cause of these sufferings, can rise with glad hearts, if we may not say to the heights of Apostolic exultation, yet to a level of tranquil delight

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Cant. ii. 11, 12. Easter Monday, Even-song—1st Lesson.



which offers to our Risen Saviour a sincere greeting on the Day of His Resurrection. Year by year we Christians accompany our Divine Lord, as it were, over again, to the Garden of the Agony, to the Hall of Judgment, to the Way of Sorrows, to the Hill of the Crucifixion. Year by year we stand by, in spirit, while Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus lay Him in His grave; and the tension of sincere feeling, of sympathetic sorrow, of penitence and contrition which this implies, is followed by a corresponding reaction on Easter morning. Yes! across the interval of eighteen centuries, we rejoice over again, in our poor way, with the company of the first disciples. We say over to ourselves, again and again, without comprehending all its meaning: "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon."<sup>1</sup> We lay ourselves open to the strong impulse of reactionary delight which has followed upon the desolation and the misery; and we cry, "This is the day which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it."

## II.

The joy of Easter, secondly, is the joy of a great certainty. The Resurrection of our Saviour is the fact which makes an intelligent Christian certain of the truth of his Creed. And in this way it satisfies a real mental want, and it occasions keen enjoyment by giving this satisfaction. The human mind has its own joys no less truly than the human heart. The human mind craves for truth not less truly than does the human heart for an object of affection, or than the human body for nourishment. In debased natures this original appetite for truth may have been killed out, but in every healthy mind, whether Christian or not, it is a lasting, and, indeed, in some sense, an insatiable appetite. It is insatiable, because its only adequate object is the Infinite Being. Well, this appetite for truth demands first of all an answer to certain questions of the very first importance to every thinking man: Whence do I come? Why am I here? What is the destiny, if any, which awaits me after death? Christ our Lord has answered these questions. He has told us authoritatively what is our true origin, what our work, and what our destiny, and how we may be secured against failure, through what He Himself has done for us. But then the question occurs, How are we to know that He

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 34.

really had authority to teach, as He did, on these great subjects? He may have had it, but what is the proof *to us*? what is the fact about Him upon which we can lay our fingers and say that it proves His right to speak as He did? The answer is: He “was crucified, dead, and buried, and then He rose again the third day from the dead.” He had said that He would rise. And He did rise. He had pointed to this coming Resurrection when the Jews asked Him for a sign of His mission. The old Hebrew prophet Jonah had been three days and three nights in the belly of a fish.<sup>1</sup> The Son of Man, to Whom this prophet, and all else that was great and noble in Hebrew history, pointed on, would be also three days in the heart of the earth.<sup>2</sup> His Resurrection would prove His right to speak as from God: to speak as compelling the allegiance of men; to speak as the organ of the highest truth on the highest subjects that could interest human beings. The Apostles accordingly entered on their work with one conviction, prominent beyond all others. It was that the truth of Christianity, and its claims upon the minds and hearts of men, mainly depended upon the fact of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. Within a few weeks of the occurrence, and amidst a population passionately interested in denying the truth of what they said, they took every opportunity of virtually saying—“Christianity is true; it is true because Christ has risen from death.” They could not have ventured to do this unless they had been sure of the fact upon which they were so ready to risk everything, even life itself; sure, with that sort of certainty which comes from actual experience. On every occasion, before every opponent, almost in every sermon, they put forward the Resurrection as their reason for being where they were and for saying what they did. Read the first chapters of the book of their Acts; see how their first discourses were full of the Resurrection; how they preached it as the sum and substance of the Gospel; almost as if it were the whole of the Christian Creed. So did Peter in Jerusalem;<sup>3</sup> so did Paul in Antioch,<sup>4</sup> and Athens,<sup>5</sup> and Corinth.<sup>6</sup> For these men the Resurrection was practically Christianity, nay, the whole of Christianity, in so far as Christianity as a whole rested on it as the proof-fact of its having come from heaven. Here was the fact which showed that the Gospel was not one

<sup>1</sup> Jonah i. 17.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xii. 40.<sup>3</sup> Acts ii. 22-36; iii. 12-16; iv. 10-12; v. 29-32.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xiii. 14, 16-37,<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xvii. 22-31.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xviii. 1-5.

Creed among many, all having some truth and some falsehood in their composition ; but that it was The Truth, the one absolute Truth, the real unveiling of the mind of God to His reasonable and immortal creatures. This is what the first Christians felt, of the truth of their Faith "God had given an assurance unto all men, in that He had raised Jesus from the dead."<sup>1</sup> Therefore did the Resurrection inspire them with such fervent joy. It was the event which riveted their grasp on the Truth which they prized above all else in life. Without the Resurrection, what was Christianity ? Possibly a beautiful thought ; possibly a new and fresh life of feeling ; a social enterprise for improving the race ; a passionate regret for a departed friend ; the highest love of human-kind ; the enthusiasm of humanity. Without the Resurrection, what was Christianity ? A human system, or at least a system uncertificated by God ; destined like other human systems to have its day, its day perchance of ascendancy, but also its day of decline ; destined "to have its day and cease to be." Without the Resurrection, what was Christianity ? On the whole, it was a failure. Had Jesus been crucified, buried, and then subjected to the decay of death, His human Life,—we must dare to say it,—would have been a splendid mistake. His miracles would have reckoned for successful juggleries. His strongest claims on the love and allegiance of men would have been resented as the language of a presumptuous self-assertion. His clearest predictions about Himself would have been set aside as the reveries of a dreamer. His death, if men still held it to be undeserved, would have only illustrated the triumph of might over a cause that was partly right. His bones might perchance have been gathered by a distant generation, and reverently laid up in a shrine more ornate than any which has covered the relics of later men who have owned His Name. But St. Paul would still have written, "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain."<sup>2</sup> Other miracles of His might conceivably have been omitted ; Christianity might still be Christianity, if the five thousand had not been fed, if the demoniacs had been uncured, if Lazarus had not been raised from death. But deny a literal Resurrection of Jesus from the grave, and you take the spring out of the year ; you remove the keystone from the arch. All else in our Creed depends on the Resurrection of Christ ; and to-day when we remind ourselves of its historical certainty, which

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvii. 31.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 14.

is scarcely less illustrated by the apparent contradictions than by the collective and direct force of the accounts which have come down to us, we experience a mental delight at the freshening touch of truth, and cry, "This is the day which the Lord hath made : we will rejoice and be glad in it."

### III.

Thirdly, the joy of Easter is inspired by the hope which Easter warrants and quickens. Hope and Joy are twin sisters. Joy best enters the human soul, when leaning on the arm of Hope. As the Apostle says, "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God."<sup>1</sup> What is this hope which Easter most distinctly puts before us? and how does it spring from our Saviour's Resurrection? The great hope which Easter sets before us is the completeness of our life after death. If Christ had never risen from the dead, there still would have been much to urge, on grounds of natural reason, in favour of the immortality of the human soul. Great thinkers, who were not Christians, have done this; and we, with the light of faith streaming on us from heaven, may well pronounce their names with affectionate reverence. But, after all, what is the exact result of their efforts? Does it approach the confines of certainty? Is it anything better than a reasonable anticipation? And, even if the immortality of the soul were certain, would it assure us of enjoying hereafter more than a mutilated existence; the existence of a soul divorced from that body which had been for so long its companion and its instrument, and with which, since the moment of its creation, its every act had been until death so intimately associated? The Jews felt that immortality must be something more than the immortality of the soul; they had, in their later history, as especially in the Maccabee period,<sup>2</sup> a certain faith in the resurrection of the body. But this faith was confined to sects and places; it was perhaps less of a faith than an opinion. When our Lord came, the complete future life of man was revealed, by being taken as a matter of course. Our Lord referred to it as He referred to the objects around Him, as a thing obvious to any soul that had eyes to see. Sometimes under figures, sometimes literally, He treated the future life as a continuance of the life which men lead here and now. The very furniture and plan of heaven: its many man-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 2.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Macc. vii. 9, 14.

sions;<sup>1</sup> the thrones<sup>2</sup> on which the disciples would sit; the effulgence of the blessed;<sup>3</sup> the new fellowship in which men and women would consort, while yet neither marrying nor giving in marriage, but being as the angels of God;<sup>4</sup> the presence of the venerable Patriarchs, living on from age to age, because God is their God, and He is not the God of the dead, but of the living;<sup>5</sup>—in this way or that the Great Future was constantly on His lips. Especially did He insist that “all in the graves would hear the voice of the Son of Man, and would come forth.”<sup>6</sup> Man’s future life would be the life of man; of a being consisting of body and soul; of a body, no doubt, spiritualised and invigorated by new properties, but still a body, continuing under new conditions the life which it had lived on earth.

How was this teaching to be brought home to the minds of men, as being something more than a religious reverie, as a literal and solemn truth? If men were to be convinced of the reality of the future life, it was necessary to grapple with the main difficulty which they feel in treating it as being what it is,—a certainty. That difficulty, as I have hinted, is not suggested by the reason. Reason, left to itself, and deliberately examining the powers and instincts of the human mind, always has leant, always will lean, to the side of belief in a future after death. In all ages of the world, the best men, in their best moments, have believed in their immortality. The difficulty of believing in a future life is due, not to the reason, but to the imagination as controlled by the senses. Who of us has not made this discovery, in some one of those dark hours, which sooner or later visit every human life? Who of us has not stood by the open coffin, and felt himself, or marked how others feel, the terrific empire of sense in the presence of death? The form which was once full of life, quivering with expressiveness, with thought, with feeling, now lies before us cold and motionless, like a plaster cast of its former self. Perhaps the traces of what must follow are already discernible; and forthwith the imagination surrenders itself, like a docile pupil, to the guidance of the senses. It follows the corpse into the grave which awaits it; it pictures to itself the gradual advances of an inevitable decay; it ponders over the chemistry of dissolution; it dwells, with affectionate but misplaced sympathy, on the surrender, first of this and then of that feature, so well

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 2.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xix. 28.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xiii. 43.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xxii. 30.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 32.<sup>6</sup> St. John v. 28, 29.



loved in life, to the gnawing agencies of decomposition and ruin ; it lives,—this imagination,—not merely, like the demoniac whom our Lord exorcised, among the tombs, but inside them ; and it ends by proclaiming the victory of death ; a victory too clear, too complete, too unquestionable, to allow reason or Revelation to raise their voices in favour of any sort of life that can possibly survive it. At such a moment the most modest anticipations of reason are deemed an unsubstantial guess : the clear teaching of Revelation a solemn fancy ; the mind's sceptre has passed to the imagination and the senses, and they decide that all ends with death, and that the grim secrets of the grave are the measure of man's impotent aspirations after a future existence.

Now it was to deal with this specific difficulty that our Lord willed to die, and then, by a literal bodily resurrection, to rise from the grave. He would grapple with the imperious urgency of the senses and the imagination on their own ground. He would beat down by an act, palpable to the senses, and attested by evidence which should warrant its reality for all time, the tyrant power which sought to shut out from man the hope of an immortal life. When the disciples saw that the Risen Being before them was their Lord ; when they noted His pierced Hands, His Feet, His Side ;<sup>1</sup> when they conversed with Him,<sup>2</sup> ate with Him,<sup>3</sup> listened to Him,<sup>4</sup> followed Him much as of old ;<sup>5</sup> then they knew that the Master Who had been killed upon the Cross by a protracted agony, and committed to the grave as a bleeding and mangled corpse, had really risen from death, and had opened a new era of hope for the human race.

And for us, in a distant age, this fact that Christ rose from death is not less full of precious hope and joy than for our first forefathers in the Faith. In our day there has been another resurrection ; a resurrection of doubt. And the gloomy uncertainties about the future which were dissipated by Christ again threaten to overshadow sections of Christendom with little less than a pagan darkness. But while negative speculation is ever active, the broad facts of human life remain what they always have been. Death claims, year by year, month by month, its victims from every household ; science and thought, it may be, reluctantly bow their heads at the

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 26, 27 ; St. Luke xxiv. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 30, 43 ; St. John xxi. 12, 13.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 44-48 ; St. John xxi. 15-22.

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 50 ; St. John xxi. 12-14 ; Acts i. 3, 4.



presence of death. They confess his power ; they can suggest nothing to relieve the gloom which surrounds his empire. Only beside the empty tomb of Jesus Christ can this generation, or those who will succeed us, recover any true hope in the destinies of man ; for “ Christ is risen from the dead, and become the Firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by Man came also the Resurrection from the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”<sup>1</sup>

It is this invigorating and joyous hope which Easter bestows on us. Unbelief once wrote at the entrance of a cemetery the word *Fuerunt*, “ They have been.” Faith always writes over the gate of a churchyard, “ I am the Resurrection and the Life.” To unbelief the dead are but memories ; memories of beings who have ceased to be. To faith the dead are living, working, praying friends, whom nothing but the dulness of sense hides from sight. They are not yet what they will be ; but they are there—

“ The dead ! They have become  
Like guardian angels to us ;  
And distant heaven, like home,  
Through them begins to woo us :  
Love, that was earthly, wings  
Its flight to holier places ·  
The dead are sacred things  
That multiply our graces.”<sup>2</sup>

The Resurrection of Christ has done its work : it has quickened our perceptions of the unseen and the future. The hope of meeting those whom we have loved and lost ; of renewing, in a brighter atmosphere, all that was worth keeping in the intercourse of earthly life ; above all, the hope of seeing and being welcomed by Him, their Lord and ours, Who in His Human Body is set at God’s right hand in heavenly places ; this hope, glorious and inspiring, springs directly from Easter Day. Truly we may exclaim with the Apostle, that God “ hath begotten us again unto a lively hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,”<sup>3</sup> and with the Psalmist, that “ this is the day which the Lord hath made : let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Yes ; Easter Day is not a day for protracted argument : it is a day for Christian joy. Of this joy the outward signs are around us. Nature and art are here ; the flowers from the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 20-22.<sup>2</sup> Faber, *Hymns*, No. 134.<sup>3</sup> 1 St. Pet. i. 3.

garden and the music of the choir ; each contributes its best to the honour of our Risen Lord. May He grant that outward tokens of joy may be for us all in keeping with an inward experience. The reality of a man's Easter joy is a fair test of his Christian sincerity. If we have at all felt sympathy with Christ in His sufferings, we must rejoice at the triumph which has ended them. If we do account our Christian faith as indeed the pearl of great price, we must rejoice at the event, which, more than any other, demonstrates its value. If we have staked our all upon the eternal future, our hearts must indeed bound with delight at the memory of that majestic Fact which shows that we have not wasted our efforts on an unsubstantial fancy. May Christ our Lord vouchsafe to deepen in us this joy in His Blessed Resurrection ; to give it more and more practical expression in our lives ; and to satisfy it perfectly hereafter, in that world where, through His Death and Resurrection, we shall be like Him, and shall see Him as He is.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 St John iii. 2

## SERMON XVI.

### EASTER CONSOLATIONS.

ST. LUKE XXIV. 17.

*And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?*

IT will be in your recollection, my brethren, that our Lord asked this question of the two disciples, whom He joined, as they were walking along the road from Jerusalem to Emmaus, on the evening of the day of His Resurrection from the dead.

Of these two disciples we know very little. One of them is named Cleopas; but he is not to be confounded with the Cleophas or Clopas, the husband of one of the Marys who stood beneath the Cross.<sup>1</sup> The other is not named, except in later Church traditions of doubtful value. All that we know is that they both belonged to the company of our Lord's disciples, while neither of them was an Apostle: since when they returned later in the evening to Jerusalem they found the eleven Apostles gathered together.<sup>2</sup> Notice here what is well worth our grateful attention. Although these two men belonged to the outer circle of the earliest company of Christ's people, and were in no way distinguished as leaders or teachers of the rest, they were selected, on the very day of the Resurrection, for an extraordinary distinction, which has made them famous in the kingdom of God to the end of time. Truly we may perceive, with St. Peter, that "God is no respecter of persons,"<sup>3</sup> and that the lowliest of His subjects is as truly an object of His loving care as are the princes of His Church; even though these last sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St John xix. 25.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Acts x. 34.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xix. 28.

St. Luke's narrative makes it probable that Emmaus was the home of one, if not of both, of these disciples. Emmaus was a village which could be reached from Jerusalem by a journey of from two to three hours. When we are told that the disciples were leaving Jerusalem on "the very same day," the expression seems to imply that they had made up their minds pretty well that the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah must be given up. They were in the position of men who had gone through a period of religious enthusiasm, and then fancied themselves to have found out that they had been mistaken. They had tried the Galilean prophet, and now they were disillusionised. In this spirit they were leaving Jerusalem, to return to their ordinary occupations at Emmaus : but while this was their general conclusion, the recent past had still far too strong a hold on them to allow them to think, as yet, of much else. Thus as they walked along the road, they "talked together of all these things that had happened."<sup>1</sup> The word which St. Luke employs implies that they did not altogether agree : much of their conversation was argument, however friendly. And, as their discussion proceeded, Jesus drew near. It is natural to ask, From what quarter ? Did He meet them, by coming along the road from an opposite direction ? Did He overtake them from behind, and, as one writer suggests, place Himself between them ? We are not told. One moment they were apparently alone : another—and He was there. There was no approach to be measured by distance and by the lapse of time. The thin air around them had yielded His Form, just as it did in the upper chamber when the doors were shut. Now in His Resurrection Life, His Body was spiritual. It had qualities which do not belong to our grosser flesh and blood. It was not ubiquitous, but It was not subject to the conditions which make movement from place to place slow, difficult, palpable to sense. He was there ; walking side by side with them. But, disciples of His though they were, and with minds and hearts quite full of Him, they did not know Him. St. Mark implies that the reason was an outward one : He appeared "in another form"<sup>2</sup> than that to which they had been accustomed. St. Luke says that the cause was internal : "their eyes were holden."<sup>3</sup> There is no contradiction : doubtless the two causes conspired to produce the result. He was there, and they did not recognise Him. Then followed His question, "What manner of

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 14.<sup>2</sup> St. Mark xvi. 12.<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 16.

communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" It was the language, not of reproof, but of sympathy. Something like reproof came later on : but as yet He can think only of their sadness. Their sadness was written, so the original word implies, in their countenances ; but He of course saw deeper. And whether the allusion to the sadness formed part of His question, or belongs, as is probable, to the Evangelist's description, does not really matter : the drift of the early part of His question was plain enough.

## I.

What was at the bottom of the sadness of the two disciples ?

It was, first of all, the sadness of a bereavement. They had been with Jesus, we know not how long ; they had seen and heard Him : He had conquered a great place in their hearts. They had seen Him arrested, insulted, crucified, dead, buried. So far their sadness was that of the Magdalene, when she asked the supposed gardener where they had laid the Sacred Body. We most of us know something of the heartache of a great bereavement.

But, then, secondly, the sadness of the disciples was also caused by mental perplexity. Here, as elsewhere in the Gospels, we see the different bearing of men and women in the hour of sorrow. A woman is most distressed when her heart has lost its accustomed object. A man is by no means insensible to this source of sorrow ; but he commonly feels a distress, which a woman does not feel, at least equally, when his intelligence, his sense of truth, is perplexed. These disciples were profoundly troubled at their inability to reconcile what had actually happened with all that Jesus had led them to expect. "We trusted that it had been He Which should have redeemed Israel."<sup>1</sup> They were still chiefly thinking of a political Redeemer, and, of course, they were disappointed. But in this disappointment lay the painful problem of the apparent untrustworthiness of a loved and trusted Friend. How were they to reconcile what had happened with what had been promised ? How were they to escape from the misgivings which seemed to be only too well warranted by the facts ?

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 21

Once more, theirs was the sadness of a forfeited object in life, of a shattered career. They had, as they thought, given themselves to Jesus, to His cause and work, for good and all. They had embarked all the energy and resolve of life in that service, in that companionship, so full, as it seemed, of coming blessing and triumph: when lo! as it appeared, all had collapsed. He was in His grave; slain by the very influences which He should first have won, and then have led to victory. There were rumours of His being alive; but only, as they thought, empty rumours. Practically all looked dark. And they were leaving Jerusalem, for good and all, and retiring to their old homes and occupations at Emmaus.

Those of you will sympathise with them who may, as young men, have embarked hope and energy in some task, which you had dared to hope would be your work for life, and then, all at once, through some unforeseen event, have been thrown out of it, stranded, wrecked. Men who never carry much heart and purpose into anything might pass through an occasion of this kind easily enough. Men who do with all their might whatsoever their hand findeth to do, and who suddenly are forced to throw up their life-work, are often thus plunged, heart and soul, into a condition, which is very imperfectly described as "sadness." "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" Our Lord's question compels an answer. And in the answer there is something of displeasure as well as of surprise. How could He be ignorant of the subject which is filling their thoughts and hearts? How could He not be aware that this is the cause of the sorrow that weighs them down? Cleopas answering said unto Him, "Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"<sup>1</sup> They thought that He must be one of the guests who had come to Jerusalem from a distance for the Paschal festival, and that He must have been living alone, in that great crowd, and so have missed seeing all that had happened; nay, He could not have heard of it. Otherwise they could not account for His strange ignorance. And He, in His tender condescension to their narrow and mistaken judgment, will not rudely set them right. He does not indeed affirm that He was one of the strangers at the feast; nor does He deny that He knew what had happened during the three preceding days. He does not ask for information; but He

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 18.



would lead them to express what they feel, that He might instruct them the better afterwards. "He said unto them, What things?" They said unto Him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, Which was a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He Which should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done."<sup>1</sup> How pathetic is this confession! First, their warm acknowledgment of the greatness of the Prophet of Nazareth: next, the shock they had experienced at His ignominious arrest and crucifixion: then the implied confession that their trust in His power of redeeming Israel from slavery and shame was no longer what it had been: and lastly, the gentle reference to a "third day," on which He had promised—they remembered without saying it—a decisive event of some kind, a Resurrection. Thus far their words breathe darkness and failure: yet in the gloom there were perplexing rays of light. "Certain women of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His Body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even as the women had said: but Him they saw not."<sup>2</sup>

Yes! They said out all this before His very Face; this story of mingled despair and hope, of hope overmastered on the whole by despair. And He—He does not emerge from the disguise, whatever it was, of His "other form,"<sup>3</sup> nor does He at once enlighten their holden eyes. Their last word is despair. "Him they saw not." They evidently thought that the sights of that early morning were a beautiful but passing illusion.

And now it was His turn to speak; it was for them to listen. He turns their thoughts away from the dark perplexities of the passing time to the ancient Scriptures of the Jewish Church. He does not ask them to trust the women, or the angels, or Peter and John: He simply asks, "Ought not the Christ to have suffered those things, and to enter into His glory?"<sup>4</sup> And then, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 19-21.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 22-24.<sup>3</sup> St. Mark xvi. 12.<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 26.

things concerning Himself.”<sup>1</sup> They were familiar with the letter of the Jewish Bible : He set before them the idea which unveiled its unity, its drift, its spirit. Then it was that their hearts burned within them, while He talked to them by the way, and opened to them the Scriptures :<sup>2</sup> and the Revelation of Truth which was begun by the exposition of Scripture on the road was completed at the sacred Eucharistic feast which followed. Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight.<sup>3</sup> He had done His work. To their hearts He had restored the old object of affection. Their understandings He had relieved of their sore perplexity. And they had re-entered on the purpose in life which seemed to have been altogether forfeited. He was living after all, and they could still, with absolute simplicity of purpose, live and work for Him.

## II.

In our modern world are to be seen, not seldom, disciples of Christ in name, downcast and saddened, who are leaving Jerusalem, as if on the point of giving Him up. And He, as of old, joins them in “another form,” so that their eyes are holden, and they do not know Him. He comes to them in His Church, which is in their eyes only a human institution ; or in His Scriptures, which seem to them but a human literature ; or in His Sacraments, in which they can discern nothing more than outward ceremonies. Yet He has a question to put to them, and a word of comfort to address to them, if they will but listen. For they are sad ; sad for nearly the same reasons as were the two disciples on the Emmaus road.

a. First of all, there is the sadness of mental perplexity. The understanding has its fashions as well as the heart ; its fashions of distress as well as its fashions of enjoyment. In our day, many men, who have not wholly renounced the name of Christ, are oppressed by what they call, not unreasonably, the mystery of existence. They see around them a world of nature, and a human world too. Each in a thousand ways creates perplexity and disappointment.

Whence comes the natural world ? If we lose sight of what faith teaches as to the creation of all things out of nothing by

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 31.

God, all is at once wrapped in darkness. We may be told that the world comes from itself : that it has formed itself, by the aid of forces within it, into the world which we see ; that it is what it is because it was what it has been. But then, whence came that which it has been ? If all is from chaos, whence comes chaos ? if all from an atom, whence the atom ? And how is it governed ? By moral laws ? by arbitrary laws ? or by a fated necessity ? Above all, for what end does the world exist ? why is existence at all remarkable ? what is the end, the purpose, the destiny of existing things ? It is folly to say that these questions should not be asked. They must and will be asked. To cease to ask them, at least in the secret recesses of the mind, is to cease to think.

Man himself too is not less a puzzle to himself than is the universe around him. Face to face with nature, man is at once conscious of insignificance and conscious of superiority. He is a mere speck in this vast expanse of heaving matter and force, and yet he is greater than it ; for he is aware of his own existence. In like manner he is controlled by material forces around him at every point of his life, while he is also conscious of being endowed with a sense of freedom. Pascal has developed this contradiction in the finest chapter of his *Thoughts* ; that on the "Grandeur and Misery of Man."<sup>1</sup> In the same manner, the contrast between man's longing for goodness and moral freedom, and his practical subjection to the habits and weaknesses of nature ; between his craving for happiness and his failure ordinarily to attain it ; between his desire for truth and his being surrounded by uncertainties, are contradictions which weigh him down. "We are always groping at problems," said Goethe. "I have spent just eleven happy days in my life," said Byron. "I was sitting yesterday," says the Christian Father, St. Gregory Nazianzen, "under the shady side of a hedge. My soul was inwardly agitated, I was plunged in grief. The questions, What have I been ? what am I now ? what will become of me ? deeply disturbed me. I do not know. A wiser than I does not know. I wander about surrounded with obscurity. What I was has escaped me. What shall I be to-morrow if I still exist ?"<sup>2</sup>

If these sad perplexities were not unknown to ancient Christians, we cannot be surprised at their being felt in our modern world, which, whatever its achievements and advantages in the realms of secular knowledge, does not always think

<sup>1</sup> ii. 79, etc.

<sup>2</sup> *Carm. de Hum. Nat.* i. 3. 14, quoted by Luthardt.

or know more of Christ our Lord than did our forefathers. And our Risen Lord offers us the true solution to these perplexities. That God made the universe ; that everything exists to promote His glory ; that He rules everything, yet on principles of order which we apprehend as law ; that in the visible world man is incomparably the most important object, and that man's soul is the most important part of man ; that the contradictions in man's intellect, his affections, and his will, are not permanent, and do but illustrate his period of trial and probation, all this we know, directly or indirectly, on our Lord's authority. And that He can speak with authority on such subjects we know, because He has given a pledge to the world of His right to speak, by first dying publicly in the full daylight of history, and then raising Himself from the dead.

β. Next, there is the sadness of the conscience. Where distinct acts of wrong-doing are not constantly and vividly present to the memory, there is a moral cloud brooding over the soul, from whose shadow escape is rarely possible. In order to feel this a man need not be a Christian, or recognise the beauty and obligation of the moral law of Jesus Christ. Heathens have felt it. Wherever there is the recognition of an inward law, however imperfect ; wherever there is a conscience at work, however feebly and intermittently, there is the sense of sin. This sense of sin is not merely the recollection of definite acts, but the perception of a moral atmosphere at variance with the Will of God. This atmosphere is not merely discoloured by the misdeeds of the soul which perceives it ; it inherits some of its discolouring ingredients, just as each human body inherits its vigour or its weakness from a remote past.

"It has often been remarked," says Professor Lassaulx of Munich, when he is discussing the spirit of ancient Greek poetry, "that in the majority of genuine national songs, there is a prevalence of the melancholy, the plaintive, and the aspiring. Aspiration is an innate feeling in man, inseparable from his inmost nature. Man's aspirations have been mingled with a feeling of sadness for the loss of innocence ; and these two radical feelings of the human heart, aspiration and sadness, have ever pervaded all genuine national poetry." "So universal a lament over the loss and ruin of the original beauty of life must," the Professor argues, "date from a time antecedent to that of the history of individual nations : it can but be the echo of a feeling which has possessed, not this or that

nation, but the human race. This note of sadness is the keynote of the earliest history, and runs in various forms through the oldest national traditions."<sup>1</sup>

This original sense of moral failure is of course largely aggravated by individual shortcomings. We instinctively feel sin to be what the common Greek word for it means ; a missing the true aim of human conduct and life. And thus the sadness which it inspires is not an artificial propriety, but a primary and natural instinct of the soul : nor does it exist the less truly because men endeavour to suppress it by noisy merriment or gross indulgence. These disguises last only for a while. The suppressed sorrow only gathers strength and volume, until at last it bursts out irresistibly, "My confusion is daily before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me.<sup>2</sup> . . . My sins have taken such hold upon me that I am not able to look up, and my heart hath failed me."<sup>3</sup>

Our Risen Lord reveals Himself to those who are weighed down by sin, as pardoning and blotting it out. He bare our sins in His Own Body on the tree ;<sup>4</sup> and it is the Blood of Jesus Christ which cleanses us from all sin.<sup>5</sup> But what it that gives His Death this power ? It is that the worth and merits of His Person are incalculable, since He is the Everlasting Son of God. And what is the proof of this which He Himself offered to His disciples and to the world ? It is His Resurrection from the dead. Deny the Resurrection of Christ, and there is no reason for believing in the atoning virtue of His Death. Recognise the historical fact, that He did rise from the dead, and the virtue of His Death, as taught by His Apostles, is credible enough. For He is plainly One Whose relation to God and to mankind altogether transcends the ordinary measures of human life.

γ. Thirdly, there is that sadness of the soul which arises from the want of an object in life ; an object to be grasped by the affections, to be aimed at by the will. This is a kind of melancholy which is common enough among persons who have all the advantages which money and position can secure : they do not know what to do with themselves. They devote themselves to expedients for diminishing the lassitude of existence ; they apply first to this excitement, then to that :

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Luthardt, *Apologet. Vorlesungen*.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xlv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xl. 15.

<sup>4</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 24.

<sup>5</sup> St. John i. 7.



they spend their lives in trying to "kill time." What a disclosure of the hopeless misuse of life lies in that expression, "killing time"! Time, that most precious gift, which is given once and not again; time, which escapes us as we think of it; time, for every minute of which we must give an account; time, in which all must be done, if anything is done, that will really last when it has ceased to be; time, in which a Christian has to work out his salvation with fear and trembling,<sup>1</sup> redeeming the time, because the days are evil;<sup>2</sup>—that time should be treated as a burden and a trouble, how surely does this mean that a life has woefully missed its object! They who work, either with the hands or with the brain, from early morning until late hours at night, are apt to think that for them the lot of life is hard, and to look with envy upon the wealthy who, as the phrase goes, have nothing to do but to enjoy themselves. How little do they dream that there is a misery of the soul, of whose approach they have never felt the first symptoms; the misery which it experiences, when, sated, jaded with that which can never satisfy, it turns back with deep unexpressible heart-sickness upon its weary self. As a well-known German poet has put it:—

"Vain emptiness where'er my glances stray,  
Life; but a tedious journey towards no shore:  
A fruitless chase from this to that,—no more;—  
We lose our little strength upon the way."<sup>3</sup>

To persons who are thus living without an object, Christ our Lord appears, once it may be at least; to teach them that there is something worth living for; the known Will of the Eternal God. And He in His Resurrection glory can speak on this too with authority: for He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the Resurrection.<sup>4</sup> It was His Resurrection which proved His Divinity: and so it warrants us in living for Him, and in devoting the exercise of our best powers to Him as to the supreme Object of life. Thus His Resurrection rescues us from the misery of an aimless existence; in which men, like children playing at marbles on the edge of a precipice, risk the loss of all while they laboriously trifle with the priceless gifts of time and life.

For the main result of our Lord's Resurrection from the dead is the certainty with which it invests the life beyond the grave.

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Lenau, qu. by Luthardt, *ub. sup.*

<sup>4</sup> Rom. i. 4.



Before He rose, the existence of that life was a speculation, based no doubt on some presumptions of the greatest weight, but still a speculation. Our Lord has made it a certainty. Yet for many of us, who own His Blessed Name, the future life is, during long tracts of time in this, only very faintly apprehended as certain ; it is borne in upon us, on two kinds of occasions more particularly, when some very near relation, or some great public character, sinks into the grave. Then it is that thought involuntarily strains to explore, if it may be, the secrets of that other sphere of being ; then it is that, during a lucid interval, we take a more accurate measure than usual of the relative insignificance of this.

My brethren, since last Sunday a great blank has been created in our national life, by the disappearance from among us of a prominent and remarkable figure, who beyond question filled all but the greatest place in the public eye.<sup>1</sup> This is not the time or the place for touching, even remotely, upon the many questions suggested by his career ; questions which have already been largely and variously discussed by the public press, and which will continue, no doubt, to be matters of controversy for some time to come. It is little to say that his abilities were of the very highest order ; that his rise to the foremost position in public life is almost, if not quite, without a parallel in our history ; and that he has left his mark upon our country, and indeed upon Europe, traced in characters which will not readily be effaced. If he had ceased to exist, it would be natural only to reconsider, again and again, those years of incessant and brilliant effort which closed with Tuesday last ; but here, in the Temple of Truth, we may not thus ignore the reality. None, as we know, ceases to exist at death. But when a human mind, up to the hour of dissolution, gives evidence of many-sided and vigorous power, we seem to have before us a sensible basis for the independent conviction, that it lives on beyond the catastrophe which has rent it from the body ; that still, as before, it is eagerly surveying the past, the present, and the future, but in the light of a new state of existence, which is beyond not only our experience but our imagination. Assuredly the only important question is, not what any of the departed have been in the sight of men, but what and where they are now. While we can seldom answer that question with certainty, we must follow those who have left us with our hopes and prayers. The

<sup>1</sup> Referring to Lord Beaconsfield's death. *Ob.* Easter Tuesday, April 19, 1881.

question itself is infinitely more important than any other that can be raised in connection with a human life. Our great concern is, not what we are called here, or what the world has said about us, for good or evil ; but what we are. God, the Perfect Moral Being, God alone is great ; and that, that only, in His creatures which resembles Him will be deemed great hereafter.

## SERMON XVII.

### THE EMMAUS ROAD.

ST. LUKE XXIV. 32.

*Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked to us by the way,  
and while He opened to us the scriptures ?*

THIS was the reflection of the two disciples whom our Lord joined as they were walking along the Emmaus road on the day of His rising from the dead. These disciples were neither of them Apostles : they were among the less prominent members of the little community which followed our Lord, and which fifty days afterwards would, on the descent of the Holy Ghost, become His Church. In the confusion and dismay which followed upon the Crucifixion,—unable as they were to share the counsels of the Eleven—they may have thought it better to retire for a time from the Holy City. So on the afternoon of Easter Day they set out for Emmaus ; talking to each other as they walked along ; talking incessantly, as was natural, about the occurrences which, to the exclusion of everything else, had filled their minds and hearts.<sup>1</sup> While thus engaged they scarcely observed that they had been joined by a Stranger. The Stranger walked on at their side, and listened, and at last broke in on the conversation. What was the subject they were discussing so earnestly ? They were for a moment too sad to reply ; but at last one of them, Cleopas, expressed his surprise that the Stranger—Whom he supposed to have come up as a pilgrim from the country to the Paschal festival,—could have been staying in Jerusalem without hearing of what had happened.<sup>2</sup> He told the Stranger of the greatness of the prophet Jesus of Nazareth, of the fate which had befallen Him at the hands of the High Priests and Rulers,

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 15-18.

and of their own deep disappointment ; since they had hoped that this Crucified Prophet would have redeemed Israel from its enslavement to the Romans. Nor was this all. This was the third day since the tragedy, and wild rumours were in the air. Some pious women of their community had visited the tomb early that morning, but the Body had disappeared. And the women said that they had seen some heavenly beings, who told them that the Prophet was alive. Since then, others had visited the spot. They confirmed the report of the women so far as it went : but they had seen nothing of Him Whose death had wrung their hearts with sorrow, and the disappearance of Whose Body from His grave had filled them with wondering dismay.<sup>1</sup>

The Stranger listened, and then, when Cleopas had ceased, He burst into grave and earnest reproaches of the speaker and his companion. Why had they not believed the report of the women? Was it the head or the heart that was at fault? Were not the sufferings of a Prophet Who claimed to be the true Messiah certainly necessary, if His claim was justifiable? Was not the promised Christ, after suffering, to enter upon a glorious existence, such as the report of the women seemed to hint at? And then, passing from rebuke to demonstration, the Stranger explained everything in the Old Testament that referred to the hope of a Deliverer, suffering yet triumphant.<sup>2</sup> He passed from Genesis to Malachi, touching with authoritative clearness upon type and symbol, upon separate passages, upon the general tenor and drift of books, upon each feature of the Hebrew Scriptures that illustrated the position and work of the Christ. To do this was to show that all which was happening in Jerusalem had already been anticipated, and indeed was only what was to be expected by instructed faith.

What must it not have been, we think, to listen to such an exposition, from such Lips, at such a time? What an experience ! to hear Him comment on the sacrifice of Isaac, or on the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement, or on the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, or on the second, or twenty-second, or forty-fifth, or seventy-second Psalms !

The time went quickly by ; but the subject was a large one ; and the exposition lasted until they were close to Emmaus. The Stranger would have left them, and passed on : He was saying farewell to them, in the usual way.<sup>3</sup> But they could not part with One to Whom, they already felt, they

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 19-24.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 25-27.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 28.

owed so much. The sun was already sinking in the west at that late hour, and He must stay in the humble home which one of them owned at Emmaus. "Abide with us," they cried, "for it is towards evening, and the day is far spent."<sup>1</sup> He consented; and they took their places at a table on which a simple supper of bread and wine was laid. Then, not waiting as a guest to be served, but exerting an authority which was gentle, irresistible, beyond dispute, He took the bread and blessed it, and gave It to them. Some Apostle would have told them of what had passed in the awful supper-room. And as they ate That which He gave them, a flood of light was poured within their souls.<sup>2</sup> It was indeed the Prophet. But how much more! How glorious, how majestic! They gazed at Him: and as they gazed, the outline of His Form became fainter. No door was opened; there was no visible movement, no observed retreat; they stretched forth their hands, and, lo! where only just now He had sat, there was vacancy. He had given them Himself, yet He had vanished from sight. And then it was that, before returning to Jerusalem to make their report to the Apostles, they thought over what had passed; and they asked themselves the question, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked to us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?"

Now this is a very suggestive question; and we may profitably occupy ourselves this afternoon with some of the points which it raises.

## I.

It suggests, first of all, the difficulty which we commonly have in understanding the real importance of many incidents in our lives at the time of their occurrence. These two disciples cared about nothing so much as their relation to their Crucified Master. Yet it seems they could be in His company for a considerable time, and hear Him explaining the Old Testament in its relations to Himself, without understanding their extraordinary privilege.

They recognised neither His Voice nor His manner. But He discovered Himself to them in administering the Holy Sacrament. Then He vanished: and they knew what had taken place. At the time all had seemed to belong to the range of ordinary experience. He might be only a country

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 30, 31.

Rabbi come up to the festival. They had no idea that any one of the Apostles who had remained in the city, was not, religiously speaking, far better off than they were.

This illustrates, I say, the difficulty we have in understanding at the time the relative importance of events in our lives, and especially of the religious events in them. We are naturally disposed to think that the important events must be striking; that they must address themselves powerfully to the imagination; that they must stand out, in obvious prominence, from among surrounding occurrences. Whereas it may very well happen that what is most important in reality, that is to say, in its bearing on our prospects in the Future Life, is in appearance commonplace and trivial.

The owner of the ass on which our Lord sat when He entered Jerusalem, had, we may be sure, very little idea of what was meant by the message, "The Lord hath need of him."<sup>1</sup> Pilate would have been astonished had he been told at the time that nothing in his whole public and official life could distantly compare in point of real significance with his trial of the Prisoner Who was placed side by side with Barabbas before his tribunal.<sup>2</sup> Pilate, as a cultivated pagan, looked at these religious matters from the outside; he was without the moral and spiritual perceptions which would enable a man to understand the scene before him. He was like an uneducated peasant examining an engraving of Albert Dürer's, or a person to whom music only represents regulated noise, listening to a sonata of Beethoven. But the Bible supplies us with instances of the same dull insensibility to the solemnity of comparatively simple occasions on the part of men who were by no means without religious interests, and were, in various senses, serving God. Again and again it has happened that, like the two disciples, such persons did not understand the meaning of some religious privilege at the time: they only knew its value afterwards, when it had passed, and they were looking back upon it. They saw visions of angels, or they communed with the Lord Himself, without suspecting the greatness of the privilege.<sup>3</sup> God disguises Himself. He comes close to Peter that He may wash his feet; and Peter cannot recognise the meaning of this humiliation of the Infinite and Omnipotent. By and by he will understand the saying, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."<sup>4</sup> It was

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xi. 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xviii. 28-40.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxviii. 16, 17; Judges vi. 22; xiii. 21.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xiii. 7.



true more than once that "these things understood not His disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things unto Him."<sup>1</sup>

This is what happens to us at the present day. We are looking out for the Divine Presence in the great events of life, if we think about God at all. We feel the solemnity of existence, the breath of another world seems to be upon us, on our wedding-day, or at the deathbed of a parent or a wife, or after a very narrow escape, or after some great shock which for the moment overwhelms the spirit and breaks us utterly down. But we do not understand that a quiet conversation with a friend, the perusal of a page in a book, a single prayer, or a good Communion, the train of reflections which are set in motion by an occurrence of very secondary importance, may be seen hereafter to have been of incalculable moment; that what was to us merely ordinary and incidental may have been the turning-point of destiny. Had the two disciples seen our Lord Jesus Christ bursting out from His sepulchre in an effulgence of glory, they would have doubtless fallen prostrate in mingled ecstasy and fear. They met Him walking quietly along a public road, and, although conscious afterwards of a certain glow of the soul in listening to Him, they practically treated Him as if He had been anybody else. It did not occur to them that anything so great could be involved in anything apparently so trivial.

Of course in this world we look at the plan of our lives from below, not from above. We deal with the task of each day, of each hour, as it comes; we have no time or capacity to make a map or theory of the whole and to arrange the several parts in their true proportion and perspective. It is with our conceptions of life as with a landscape painting; some tree in the immediate foreground fills up a third of the canvas, while the towers of a great city, or the outlines of a mountain range, lie far away in the distance.

In another state of existence the relative worth of everything will be clear to us: here we constantly make the wildest mistakes, partly from the narrowness of our outlook, and partly from the false ideals which too often control our judgment. We look out for the sensational, which never comes to us quite as we anticipate it; we walk near Jesus Christ, Who veils His Presence, in the ordinary paths of life;

<sup>1</sup> St. John xii. 16.

perhaps we never get beyond a certain passing glow of emotion, which dies away and leaves us where we were. Our hearts burn within us. But what this has meant we only find out when it is too late.

## II.

Another point suggested by the words is the use of religious feeling. "Did not our heart burn within us?" The disciples ask each other the question in a tone of self-reproach. While our Lord explained to them the true sense of the Hebrew Scriptures with reference to His Person and His work, His sufferings and His triumph, their whole inward being, thought, affection, fancy, had kindled into flame. They were on fire, and yet it all had led to nothing. Ought it not to have led to something? Ought it not, at the least, to have convinced them that, within the range of their experience, One only could have spoken as He did?

In the history of religion, men have formed, at different epochs, very opposite estimates of the value and functions of feeling.

Sometimes it has been distrusted and depreciated. Religion has been held to consist only in the exercise of the understanding on the great and solemn subjects which cannot long be absent from human thought; God, the Future, man's actual place and work in the universe. These questions, it has been held, should be approached in a temper as dry and passionless as chemistry or astronomy or pure mathematics. Emotion is said to be only a disturbing force; there is no place for emotion, if thought is to be strong, if it is to run clear. According to this view, religion does not differ in temper, nor very greatly in subject-matter, from philosophy. The objects with which it is concerned are indeed already ascertained; but thinking about them—as distinct from feeling about them or acting on them—is said to be the proper function of religion.

At other times religion has been identified no less absolutely with duty. To have a clear conception of what is to be done and avoided in life, and to be practically loyal to it, that, we are told, is the sum and substance of religion. All beyond is surplusage. Thought, even when exercised on the sublimest objects; emotion, even when kindled by the most legitimate considerations, are quite distinct from the true essence of religion. Indeed there is said to be danger lest they should

distract attention from that which really has claims upon us, from day to day, from hour to hour, namely, the intrepid and uninterrupted pursuit of duty.

Men never indulge in one-sidedness of this kind with impunity. Every truth that is insulted sooner or later has its revenge; every exaggeration has attached to it the penalty of an exaggeration in the direction opposite to its own.

Accordingly in Germany, during the middle of the last century, and in this country more recently, the reaction from a narrow conception of religion as merely a higher department of intelligence, or merely another name for duty and good conduct, has resulted in religious movements which practically have made religion to consist almost entirely in emotion. Justification by faith has not seldom come practically to mean justification by emotion, roused, from time to time, by discourses or reflections on the atoning work of Christ. Further, this emotion has sometimes seemed to be of greater practical importance than the object which has summoned it into existence, or than the conduct to which it ought to lead. To be in possession of this emotion has appeared enough to enable its possessor to dispense with any accurate ideas about the Being Who has called it forth; until, at last, persons on the edge of extreme unbelief, have congratulated themselves on the possession of religious feeling, though it would have been difficult for them to say exactly about what or whom; and other persons, violating what they knew to be the moral law of God, have satisfied themselves that they have no reason for anxiety, since they have succeeded in retaining warm religious emotions.

Certainly, my brethren, true religion cannot afford to neglect any elements of man's complex nature; and so it finds room for emotion. That glow of the soul with which it should hail the Presence of its Maker and Redeemer is as much His handiwork as the thinking power which apprehends His message or the resolve which enterprises to do His Will. Yet religious emotion, like natural fire, is a good servant but a bad master. It is the ruin of real religion when it blazes up into a fanaticism that in its exaltation of certain states of feeling, proscribes thought, and makes light of duty, and dispenses with means of grace, and passes through some phase of frantic, although disguised self-assertion, into some further phase of indifference or despair. But, when kept well in hand, emotion is the warmth and lustre of the soul's life. It announces the nearness and the beauty of the King of Truth; it lifts the

performance of duty from the level of mechanical obedience to the level of ordered enthusiasm. Often, as in the souls of the two disciples, it is as the brightness of the dawn, which should tell that the Sun of Truth is near ;

“ Lift up your eyes, even now His coming glows ;  
Where on the skirt of yon heaven-kissing hill  
The trees stand motionless  
Upon the silvery dawn.

Deep ocean treasures all her gems unseen,  
To pave an archway to the Eternal door ;  
And earth doth rear her flowers  
To strew the heavenly road.”

Yes ; the wealth of emotion which muses ere the fire kindles, and the soul, speaking with the tongue of truth, owns its Lord, is a precious gift of God. Only it should always be made to lead to something. It is a means, not an end. And the disciples reproach themselves with having felt this heavenly glow in their hearts without recognising and worshipping the Divine Teacher Who had spoken to them. “ Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked to us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures ? ”

### III.

A third consideration which the words suggest, is the duty of making an active effort to understand truth as it is presented to us. I say, an active effort ; because, as a rule, our minds are apt to be passive. We let truth come to say what it can ; we do not go out to meet it, to welcome it, to offer it a lodging in the soul, and, if it may be, to take its measure and understand it. The disciples tacitly reproach themselves with not having done this. Had they seriously endeavoured to make the most of our Lord's instruction, they would have seen at once Who He was.

Everybody who has had experience in teaching knows how much depends upon the teacher's power of rousing the mind of his pupil to take an interest in the subject which is being taught. The information given may be the best to be had, the method of conveying it admirable for its clearness and simplicity, the general capacity of the master beyond dispute, but there is no chance of real success unless a child's mind makes a responsive effort. If it remains passive, the most interesting truths,

the most touching narratives, will trickle over the surface of it, and find no place within. The mind of the learner must always co-operate with the teacher in the work of instruction, and the teacher's first duty is to rouse it to do this.

This was well understood in the early Church, and it led to the adoption of the catechetical method of instructing those who were candidates for Baptism. Sermons were not equal to the occasion; because while listening to a sermon the mind may be passive throughout, as were the minds of the two disciples when listening to our Lord. But catechising rouses the mind whether we will or not; it quickens the conscious possession of knowledge, or it creates the healthy sense of ignorance, which, in the absence of knowledge, is always valuable. Far better is it to know that we do not know, than to be really ignorant, especially of an important subject, while we fancy in a vague way that we know something about it. The great Christian school of Alexandria, which was in the first three centuries of the Church's life the chosen home of its ripest and widest thought on the Revelation of God in Christ, was also the great scene, and we may also almost say, the product of the catechetical method.

Every one who is taking pains with his own soul will be careful to catechise himself in private, not only as to questions of conduct, but as to matters of faith and knowledge. What do I believe on this subject? why do I believe it? does it involve my believing anything more? does it oblige me to modify or to re-shape any other opinions that I hold on other subjects? What are its bearings on my conduct? what its demands on my conscience? Surely we may not walk along the road of life, even side by side with the Light of the world, and expect that religious knowledge will come to us as a matter of course, and without our taking trouble to win it. No earthly business or art or science is learnt without the sacrifice of time, without serious and repeated effort; and religious truth is no exception to the rule. And yet how commonly do men think that the most important kind of knowledge will force itself upon them without their making any endeavour to secure and understand it: that some special inspiration or some singular accident will absolve us from the necessity of taking trouble. If we have serious thoughts now and then, and look into our Bibles in a casual way, and attend some of the Church Services, we think we have good reason to be satisfied that we know all that it concerns our soul's



health to know ; perhaps even that we know enough to discuss religious questions of the day with confidence. We drift through life in this way, some of us ; making our feelings and preferences the rule of truth ; assuming that what is popular for the passing hour, or what comes readily to us, must be the Will of God. He indeed is near from Whom we might learn the truth ; walking by our side, ready and longing to be inquired of if we only will ; but we dispense ourselves from the necessity. Religious truth, we say to ourselves, is very simple and easy of acquirement ; that which is intended for all must be open to all, and cannot be the monopoly of those who make efforts to know it.

And yet nothing in the Bible is clearer than that it makes the attainment of truth depend upon an earnest search for truth. "Seek," our Lord says, "and ye shall find."<sup>1</sup> "Those that seek Me early shall find Me."<sup>2</sup> "Call upon Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."<sup>3</sup> "If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God."<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, let us reflect that our Lord's Presence with His disciples during the forty days after His Resurrection was in many ways an anticipation of His Presence in His Church to the end of time. His religion wears a commonplace appearance ; its sacred books seem to belong to the same category as the works of human genius ; its Sacraments are, St. Augustine said, rites chiefly remarkable for their simplicity ; its ministers are ordinary, and often erring and sinful, men. But for all that, the Incarnate Son is here, Who was crucified and rose from death, and ascended and reigns in heaven, He is here ; and the trial and duty of faith is what it was eighteen centuries ago, namely, to detect, under the veil of the familiar and the commonplace, the Presence of the Eternal and the Divine. We too walk along the road to Emmaus ; and the Divine Teacher appears to us, as St. Mark puts it, "in another form ;"<sup>5</sup> and our hearts, perhaps, glow within us, yet without doing anything for our understandings or our wills.

Surely we should look back on any occasions when He has

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. vii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. viii. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. xxxiii. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Prov. ii. 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> St. Mark xvi. 12.



enabled us to feel something of His nearness, not only with thankfulness but with awe. These occasions do not occur for nothing. We shall be reminded of them one day, and of the use which we have or have not made of them.

“Did not our hearts burn within us?” Before we take leave of Easter—it may be of our last Easter—before its Alleluias have died away upon the air, let us consider how far it has been blessed to us in this way, and whether we have used the blessing to God’s glory. It is a main purpose of the great festivals of the Church, to rekindle in Christians a practical devotion to our Divine Redeemer in the leading acts and mysteries of His Life. Have we felt any increased love for Him Whose triumph and glory we have been celebrating? Did our heart burn within us, at that early Communion, or during the reading of that familiar Gospel, or when they were singing that anthem, or while we joined in that hymn? Did the associations of some early years, and scenes and faces which have passed away, and modes of feeling which seemed to have been parted with for ever, rise up again, as if from the dead, to be enlarged, enriched, consecrated, by our later experiences, by riper knowledge of our Divine Lord and His redemptive work and grace, and of what life is, and is tending to be? If so it was, let us, while yet we may, try to turn this feeling to good account; to do something that we should not otherwise have done; to forego something that we should otherwise have indulged in; to master some dimly or half-apprehended side of truth; to learn something more of what it most concerns us to know. So will our Emmaus walk be blessed to us; we shall meet our Heavenly Companion again and again in the Breaking of Bread, and we shall know Him one day even more perfectly, when upon recognition He will not vanish from our sight, but will abide with us to be our possession and joy for all eternity.

## SERMON XVIII.

### JESUS ON THE EVENING OF EASTER DAY.

ST. LUKE XXIV. 39.

*Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.*

IT was on the evening of the day of His Resurrection, and on the occasion described by St. John in to-day's Gospel, that our Lord uttered these words. Of the Eleven, in St. Thomas's absence, only ten were present. They were assembled in a secret chamber for fear of the Jews; and with them were other friends and disciples. They were discussing the report of our Lord's appearance to Peter, when they were joined by the two disciples who had met our Lord, as St. Mark says, in a different form or guise,<sup>1</sup> on the Emmaus road during the afternoon, and who had known Him in the Breaking of Bread. Not to mention what must have reached them from St. Mary Magdalene and the other women, these two reports from the two disciples and from St. Peter, thus combined, may well have made the hearts of those present beat more quickly than they did before. Where was He? Would He show Himself? Would they too see Him? Would He most resemble the Jesus of the Transfiguration or the Jesus of Calvary? Would He be as He was before He suffered? or would His visage be still so marred that only a few would know Him? or would He be so changed into an unimagined form of glory and beauty, that the Sacred Face would be hardly recognised, except by very intimate friends, like Simon Peter? Or was all this purely idle speculation? Might not Peter—some may have reasoned thus at that time,—might not Peter have been himself deceived? Might the two disciples have mistaken some one else for their Master; could they have read His well-

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xvi. 12.

remembered Features into the countenance of some other Rabbi? It was in the midst of some such a turmoil of hopes and fears, of speculations and doubts, of bold anticipations and despairing conjectures, that Jesus Himself appeared. He gave no sign of His approach. Angels were guarding His empty tomb; but no angel visibly announced Him. There was no sound that rent the air; no blaze of brilliant light, as on the Holy Mount, illumined the chamber; no wall fell, as before the conqueror of Jericho; no door was opened. All had been fastened up for safety's sake against the Jewish enemy: all remained as it had been. But they looked; and behold He was there; He was in the very midst of them. How they knew not, but so it was; the thin air had yielded to their sight that Form, that Countenance Which they could not but recognise. And then, a second sense was summoned to support the evidence of sight. The Form which they beheld spoke; He spoke in a Voice with whose every intonation they were so familiar; "Jesus saith unto them, Peace be unto you."<sup>1</sup>

The Evangelist describes the immediate effect. They were terrified and affrighted. They had seen, as they thought, an inhabitant of another world. Not an appearance without essence, as some have conjectured; not an angel, since an angel is a specifically distinct being from a man; still less, as it has been imagined, an evil spirit self-changed into a form of light; but the disembodied spirit of their dead Master making itself visible; this was what the disciples supposed that they saw. The language of the Evangelist leaves no real room for question on this head. They thought that the Body of Jesus was still resting in the grave in the rich man's garden; their incredulity, which was proof against the remembered predictions of their Master, was also proof against the report of Peter and the two disciples. But, as they could not mistake either the Form before them or the Voice to which they listened, they supposed that Jesus, being dead, had appeared to them as spirit without a body. It was, they believed, His ghost that they saw. My brethren, however we may account for it, man has a secret terror at the thought of contact with pure spirit, unclothed by a bodily form; this dread, I say, is part of our human nature. Perhaps it is due to an apprehension that a disembodied spirit, with its superior freedom and subtlety of movement, may easily take beings such as we are, weighted with a body of sense, at a fearful disadvantage.

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 36.

Perhaps it is to be referred to a dim sense of the truth that our nature is really mutilated, when, during the interval between death and the resurrection, the soul exists for a time apart from the body ; it is difficult else to account for the dread of such appearances among those who look forward to a time in which they themselves will be bodiless spirits. St. Paul betrays something of the feeling in question, when he writes to the Corinthians of the spirit after death as "unclothed ;"<sup>1</sup> as though death inflicted an outrage upon our poor humanity, and the state of the dead until the resurrection had about it inevitably a touch of the unnatural. Certain, at any rate, it is that the feeling expressed by Eliphaz the Temanite holds good for all time :—

"In the visions of the night,  
When deep sleep falleth on men,  
Fear came upon me, and trembling,  
Which made all my bones to shake.  
Then a spirit passed before my face ;  
The hair of my flesh stood up :  
It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof :  
An image was before mine eyes ;  
There was silence. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

This instinct of our nature, which shrinks from contact with the spirits of the dead, is by no means confined to, or chiefly exhibited in, fervent believers in Divine Revelation. On the contrary, doubt as to Revealed Truth is the natural soil for all unreasoning fears : men ever feel that any horror from beneath is possible, when no blessing is certain from above. Saul is naturally drawn towards the witch of Endor ;<sup>3</sup> and the spiritualism, so called, of our day, weird and even grotesque as it often is, gains its most distinguished adherents from among the advocates of pure materialism. Had the disciples looked forward to the fulfilment of their Master's word, as a simple matter of course, they would have welcomed Him with reverent love ; and this love would have cast out tormenting fear.<sup>4</sup> As it was, they fell back upon the surmise that He was a ghost ; and they shivered at perceiving how near this unearthly being was to each of them.

They said nothing. But He, as always, knew what they felt, what they thought.<sup>5</sup> He did not conjecture their thoughts and feelings ; He read them with that penetrating inward glance,

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. v. 4.<sup>2</sup> Job iv. 13-16.<sup>3</sup> 1 Sam. xxviii. 7.<sup>4</sup> 1 St. John iv. 18.<sup>5</sup> St. John ii. 24, 25.

which makes Him, in time and in eternity, the Master and Judge of souls ; and He was ready with His consolations. "Why are ye troubled ? and why do reasonings arise in your hearts ? Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself : handle Me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."

This scene is suggestive of so many considerations that a choice is difficult. But there are three which, as it appears to me, claim especial attention just at present.

### I.

Here we note first of all our Lord's indulgent treatment of mistakes and imperfections in religious belief. We may venture to say that the disciples, seeing our Lord in the midst of them, ought to have recognised Him at once. They knew, from long companionship with Him, that there were no discoverable limits to His power over life and nature. They knew that He had been transfigured on the mountain,<sup>1</sup> and had walked upon the sea.<sup>2</sup> They knew that He had formally claimed to be Messiah, by assuming the distinctive title of Messiahship,—the "Son of Man."<sup>3</sup> They knew that He had shown to them from the Old Testament that the Messiah must suffer, and rise again the third day, in virtue of a prophetic necessity.<sup>4</sup> They knew indeed that to remove all doubt He had, on more occasions than one, and very solemnly, stated that this would happen to Himself ;<sup>5</sup> so that, when they saw Him led forth to death, and expiring in agony, and laid in a tomb, they might have known what would follow. The earlier part of His prediction had been fulfilled to the letter ; were they not sure enough of His power to be certain that what remained would be fulfilled as well ?

That our Lord held His disciples responsible for such knowledge as this is plain from the words which He had used, earlier in the afternoon, when addressing the two on the Emmaus road : "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken : ought not the Christ to have

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xvii. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> St. Mark vi. 48.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 13.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xviii. 31-33 ; St. Mark ix. 12.

<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. xvi. 21 ; xvii. 22, 23.

suffered these things, and to enter into His glory ? ”<sup>1</sup> And then, continues the Evangelist, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself.”<sup>2</sup> The reproach addressed to the two disciples seems to imply that, in their case, the responsibility may have been enhanced by the enjoyment of certain opportunities which we cannot accurately measure. But St. Mark refers to the very scene we are now considering by saying that Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them that had seen Him after He rose from the dead.<sup>3</sup> Yet, looking to St. Luke’s report, what tender censure it is ! Here certainly is no expression which betrays grief or anger. He meets their excitement with the mildest rebuke ; if it be a rebuke. “Why are ye disquieted ? and why do critical reasonings arise in your hearts ? ”<sup>4</sup> He traces their trouble of heart to its true source ; the delusion which possessed their understandings, about His being only a “spirit.” In His tenderness He terms their unworthy dread a mere disquietude of the heart ; they are on a false track, and He will set them right. They doubt whether what seems to be the Body which hung upon the Cross is really before them ; let them look hard at His Hands and at His Feet which had been pierced by the nails. They doubt their sense of sight ; very well, let them handle Him ; they will find that it is not an ethereal form, which melts away at the experiment of actual contact. He does not peremptorily condemn their notion that a bodiless spirit had appeared to them, as if it were a mere superstition ; He even seems to sanction it, when He observes that such spirits have not flesh and bones which answer to the sense of touch. He appeals, let us observe, not merely to hearing and to sight, but to touch. “Handle Me,” He says, “and discern.”<sup>5</sup> Remember St. John’s language at the beginning of his First Epistle ; “That Which we have heard, That Which we have seen with our eyes, Which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life ; ”<sup>6</sup> it may well show that they took Him at His word. Touch indeed is the least intellectual, the bluntest, the most material of the five senses. In the order of spiritual precedence, it is below taste and smell, just as sight, and still more hearing, are above them. Touch may be

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 25, 26.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 27.<sup>3</sup> St. Mark xvi. 14.<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 38.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 39.<sup>6</sup> 1 St. John i. 1.



deceived at least as easily as sight. But in certain depressed mental states touch affords a sense of confidence which sight cannot command ; it supplies a kind of evidence which, united with other and higher testimony, removes a last obstacle to faith.

Our Lord knows that all this might have been, that it ought to have been unnecessary. But He also measures human weakness. He knows how the tyranny of sense, and of the mental habits which are governed by the senses, holds down the aspirations of faith and love. He, the True Parent and Deliverer of men, "knoweth of what we are made ; He remembereth that we are but dust."<sup>1</sup>

What a lesson is here for all who, whether as fathers and mothers, or teachers, or clergymen, have upon their hands the immense responsibility of imparting religious truth to others ! The first condition of successful teaching is patient sympathy with the difficulties of the learner. To be able to remember that others may have difficulties of their own which we have never had ; that they may have been denied opportunities which have been freely granted to us ; that they are possibly weighed down by incumbrances of which we have known nothing ; that they perhaps need assistance, which for us may have been unnecessary ; this is a first requisite for successful teaching. It is easy to upbraid ; it is not always easy to explain or to convince. To be patient with misapprehension, even with folly ; to condescend to explanations where they might be deemed superfluous ; to make the best of all that is admitted in the direction of truth, and the least of all that obscures and contradicts it ; to make truth easy of acceptance, by appealing to the lower as well as to the higher powers of the learner, to the senses as well as to the reason ;—this is to imitate our Lord. Very often indeed it depends upon a teacher, whether the learner is to be satisfied that he is face to face with the substance, and not merely with the ghost of a religion ; whether he really beholds the hands and feet ; whether he is convinced of the reality of the flesh and bones.

A great master was once asked, "What is the first condition of successful teaching ?" "Patience," he said. "What is the second ?" "Patience." "What is the third ?" He paused, then said ; "Sympathy." And what a rebuke is here on the want of considerateness, of courtesy, of generosity, which so often disfigures our modern treatment of real or supposed religious error ! Is it not the case, brethren, that

<sup>1</sup> Ps. ciii. 14.

instead of making a return to reason or a return to faith easy for a straying sheep, modern Christians often set themselves to making it impossible? Do they not exaggerate mistakes? Do they not exasperate misunderstandings? Do they not imagine that, in order to be faithful to known truth, a man must needs display a certain measure of official ferocity towards those who misapprehend it? Do they not sometimes assume that to be tender and considerate implies a certain lack of straightforwardness? Are arguments never valued less for their intrinsic worth than for the language which enforces them in terms calculated to convey pain and insult? Who can wonder at our failures to convince, when our methods are so unlike that of the Great Teacher!

## II.

Here, too, we see our Lord's sanction of the principle of inquiry into the foundations of our religious belief. Certainly He said to St. Thomas a week afterwards, that they were blessed who had not seen His open Wounds, and yet had believed His Resurrection.<sup>1</sup> But in St. Thomas's case, as a week earlier in that of the Ten and their friends, He sanctions, nay He invites, inquiry, observation, reflection. He does not say, 'If after the testimony of My prophets, after My Own assurances, after the report of My disciples, you cannot believe that I am risen from My grave, and that you see Me before you; then continue in your unbelief; be gone.' He does say, 'Use the means of inquiry which God has given you: behold My pierced Hands and Feet; see for yourselves that I am He Who hung upon the Cross: nay, touch Me, if thus only you can escape from your illusion, and can discover for yourselves that a Body of flesh and bones is before you, endowed indeed with new and glorious properties, but with Its substantial identity unimpaired.'

Certainly, my brethren, inquiry into the grounds of faith is not the noblest department of religious activity. Our highest duty towards religious truth is to act on it; to expend the strongest and choicest forces of our souls in paying the rightful tribute of love, adoration, obedience, joyful and constant devotion to Him Whose glory and beauty, and mercy and strength, are thus made known to us. And undoubtedly there are souls who, from childhood until death, thus offer to God a

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 29.

continuous service of the affections and of the will. They see truth intuitively as did St. John ; they sit and gaze on it as did Mary of Bethany ; to them one prayer beyond all others is dear : "Behold, my delight is in Thy commandments ; O quicken me in Thy righteousness."<sup>1</sup> And thus, though they live in an age of cold indifference to, or of insolent rebellion against, Revealed Truth, they are "not afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day ; for the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the sickness that destroyeth at the noonday."<sup>2</sup> Happy and privileged souls ! some of whom are to be recognised in every generation, and not least in our own ; happy souls whose eyes are ever directed upwards, whose feet are ever pressing forwards, upon whom the burning fiery furnace of human struggle and passion has had no power ; as though they had been all along "hidden privily in God's Own Presence from the provoking of all men, and kept secretly in His Tabernacle from the strife of tongues."<sup>3</sup> Some such there were in that upper room. They needed not to gaze curiously at the glorious Wounds, or reverently to handle the very Limbs of the Redeemer ; they knew that He was there ; that He had risen indeed ; that He had appeared unto Simon.

With most of us, it is different ; God knows how different. We are of our age ; acting perhaps feebly upon it ; acted upon by it, we may be sure, most powerfully ; sharing its great privileges, its inspiring hopes and efforts ; sharing too its prejudices, its errors, its illusions. On most of us it leaves many a scar ; if it does no worse. We, after our fashion, meet Stoics and Epicureans at Athens ;<sup>4</sup> we, too, after the manner of men, fight, or ought to fight with beasts at Ephesus.<sup>5</sup> And this means that the life of affection and obedience is necessarily traversed by another life ; the life of the critical understanding. If in our day the understanding cannot but survey religious truth, seriously, eagerly, keenly ; it need not forget the duties of reverence ; it may enable us the better to do the Apostle's bidding, and "be ready to give to every man a reason of the hope that is in us."<sup>6</sup>

Undoubtedly the understanding has great and exacting duties towards Revealed Truth. If God speaks, the least that His rational creatures can do is to try to understand Him. And therefore, as the powers of the mind gradually unfold them-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxix. 40.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xci. 5. 6.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xxxi. 22.<sup>4</sup> Acts xvii. 18-20<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 32.<sup>6</sup> 1 St. Pet. iii. 15.

selves, the truths of religion ought to engage an increasing share of each of them, and not least of the understanding. What too often happens is, that while a young man's intelligence is interesting itself more and more in a widening circle of subjects, it takes no account of religion. The old childish thoughts about religion lie shrivelled up in some out-of-the-way corner of a powerful and accomplished mind, the living and governing powers of which are engaged in other matters. Then, the man for the first time in his life meets with some sceptical book; and he brings to bear on it the habits of thought and judgment which have been trained in the study of widely different matters. He forms, he can form, no true estimate of a subject, so unlike any he has really taken in hand before: he is at the mercy of his new instructor, since he knows nothing that will enable him to weigh the worth or the worthlessness of startling assertions. He makes up his mind that science has at length spoken on the subject of religion; and he turns his back, with a mingled feeling of irritation and contempt, on the truths which he learned at his mother's knee.

This is no imaginary case; and among the reasons which go to explain so sad a catastrophe, this, I say, is one; that the understanding has not been properly developed in the boy and the young man, with relation to religious truth. What is the law of that development? It is this; that as the mind grows, it learns to reinforce the teaching of authority by the inquiries of reverent reason. When we learn religious truths as children, we necessarily take them all as our mother teaches them. She offers us no explanations, and we could not understand her if she did. And, mark you well, to the end of the longest life, and in the case of the strongest and most cultivated minds, there must always be much in God's Revelation of Himself which stretches away high into the heights of heaven, and deep into the depths beneath, out of the reach and ken of any human faculty; much which must be received, if at all, on God's authority, without possibility of verification. But this does not apply to the whole of the Christian Creed. In respect of many districts of a Christian's faith, if the mental and moral growth be healthy and symmetrical, there should be a constant invigoration of what is learnt from authority through what is observed, thought out, handled by the mind for itself. Authority does not disappear. The collective Christian society gradually takes the place of the single parent. But authority

is no longer the sole support of faith. Faith finds its support increasingly in that which is suggested by reason from within, as well as in that which is imposed from without. According to the Apostle's rule, to faith is added, first virtue ; then to virtue, knowledge ;<sup>1</sup> and knowledge, which, in other circumstances, and later, might be a foe to sincere belief, is in early life the secret of its vigour.

Depend on it, a time comes to many thoughtful young men and women, when they are tempted to think that what they have learnt in childhood about life and death, and God and Jesus Christ, and all that bears on our place in the eternal world, is uncertain ; the shadow of an old creed which still haunts the earth ; the echo of voices which ought wholly to have died away at the close of the Middle Ages. To many a young man, the first visit to his mind of this terrible suspicion, has brought real and keen agony, in this our own day and country. But in every such trial, to every sincere soul, there is, I dare to say, a voice to be heard which still whispers, "Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself : handle Me, and see ; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have." You think, young man, that it is the ghost of a religion which confronts you ; handle it, and you will see for yourself that it rests on a basis, at least as sure as any of the ordinary forms of human knowledge. It rests on history. The Life, and Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ is not a work of the sanctified imagination of a later age ; it is, at least, as much a part of the story of our race as are the life, the victories, the assassination of Julius Cæsar. Handle it, searchingly but reverently, and you will discern this for yourself : you will see that there is in it an intrinsic consistency, a solidity, a power of resistance to critical solvents, which you have not suspected. But do not suppose that, because it condescends to be thus tested by your understanding, as regards its reality, it is therefore within the compass of your understanding, as regards its scope. It begins with that which you can appraise ; it ends in that which is beyond you : because while you are finite and bounded in your range of vision, it is an unveiling of the Infinite, of the Incomprehensible. Yes ; Christianity plants its feet firmly on the soil of earth ; its hands are seen again and again working in the stirring agencies of human history ; but it rears its head towards the sky ; it loses itself amidst the clouds of heaven. We see the

<sup>1</sup> 2 St. Pet. i. 5.



very feet, the hands, the utter reality of the One Incomparable Life ; but we only see enough to know assuredly that there is much more which is necessarily and utterly above us, since it is lost, as the Apostle would say, in the majestic "depths of the riches both of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God."<sup>1</sup>

### III.

Once more, note here the direction which our Lord purposely gave to the thoughts of His perplexed disciples. He does not turn them in upon themselves ; He does not take their trouble, so to speak, sympathetically to pieces, and deal with its separate elements : He does not refute one by one the false reasonings which arise within them. He does not say to them : 'These disquietudes, these doubts, are mere mental disorders, or interesting experiences, and the mind itself can cure diseases which the mind has produced.' He would, on the contrary, have them escape from themselves ; from the thick jungle of their doubts and fears and hopes and surmises ; and come to Him. Whatever they may think, or feel ; He is there, seated on a throne which enthusiasm did not raise, and which doubt cannot undermine ; in His Own calm, assured, unassailable Life. "Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself : handle Me, and see ; for a mere spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."

Religious men, speaking broadly, may be divided into two classes : those who are mainly occupied with themselves, and those who are mainly occupied with God. In modern language, we should call the religion of the first class, subjective ; that of the second, objective. Subjective religion makes self the centre of all else ; the soul's feelings, thoughts, experiences, are of first account ; while Almighty God, His Truth and Grace, are interesting as ministering to or illustrating the varying experiences and moods of the thinking subject, of self. Thus self is the centre of the circle ; God is only a point on the circumference. Objective religion, on the contrary, makes God the Being around Whom all else, the soul included, revolves. God, the Perfect and Self-existing, His Almightyness, His Intelligence, His Mercy, His Justice, His matchless Beauty, His unruffled and everlasting Peace ; and then, His self-manifestation in the Eternal Son, Incarnate and Crucified, with the resulting Gifts of Grace, ministered by His

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xi. 33.



Spirit, through His Sacraments ; all this is of first account. When contemplating this splendid vision of the Truth the soul forgets itself. It forgets the relative, the shifting, the transitory, when it gazes on the Absolute, the Unchanging, the Eternal ; it forgets its own petty, narrow, uncertain moods, when it looks out in good earnest on the awful and entrancing magnificence of God. Of objective religion, then, God is the centre ; and self, with all its fitful experiences, is a mere point on the circumference.

Not that any religion, to be adequate, can be wholly of the one or of the other description. Objective religion, if unaccompanied by earnest care of the conscience, may easily degenerate into the sort of interest which an intelligent man cannot but take in the highest of all subjects, without its practically changing, moulding, invigorating his life. Doubtless to know God truly we must feel our personal need of Him ; the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. To commune with our own hearts and search out our spirits, till we can say with David, "My sin is ever before me ;"<sup>1</sup> to study self in order to be self-distrustful and humble, and for no other purpose whatever ;—this is beyond doubt of vital import to our eternal peace. It is in the feebleness of his own resolutions, in the history of his own failures, often in the profound degradations of his own life, that the Christian learns the folly of "going about to establish his own righteousness" instead of submitting himself to the righteousness given by God in Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Not to know self, is to be only a speculative divine, or a heartless formalist.

But the danger of our day lies mainly in the opposite direction. Of modern religion, the greater part is subjective. It is not our Lord Jesus Christ, but our faith in Him, our affections towards Him, our experiences, our assurances, our convictions, about which many of us think chiefly. If it is healthy to dwell on our sins, it is very far from healthy to dwell on our emotions. Man himself, not Christ, is the object of this sort of religious enthusiasm. There is in it no forgetfulness of self, for a single moment ; there is nothing of the spirit of St. Paul's saying, "To me to live is Christ ;"<sup>3</sup> since self is exalted at the very Feet of the Redeemer. We even hear faith spoken of as a creative faculty. It is said by some to create whatever God gives us through His Sacraments. Others, with fatal consistency, go further, and speak as though faith could create the righteous-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. li. 3.<sup>2</sup> Rom. x. 3.<sup>3</sup> Phil. i. 21.

ness which justifies the sinner, or even the Attributes of the Eternal Being. And thus, as the human mind is represented, not as simply receiving, but as originating the strength which is to save it and the objects upon which it dwells, it soon finds out that it can change these objects at will. Idols may be made by the mind just as easily as with the hands; and so it comes to pass that, side by side with the Christ of the Gospels, there are false and imaginary Christs in Christendom, who approve of all that their votaries desire, who condemn only what their votaries dislike, who are crowned, not with thorns, but with roses, and who smile tolerance or recognition upon errors and excesses which the true Christ of Christendom has for ever condemned. And thus is realised the stern irony of the Psalmist: "With the holy Thou shalt be holy: and with a perfect man Thou shalt be perfect. With the clean Thou shalt be clean: and with the froward Thou shalt learn frowardness."<sup>1</sup> This is the ripe product of the subjective spirit in its exaggeration; and you will observe how closely allied it is to the conclusion of a Pantheistic thinker, that the whole object-matter of religion is really reflected into the heavens by the real or supposed necessities of the human soul. The only safeguard against it lies in clinging firmly to the objective character of real Christianity, as based upon assured historical facts. Let us remind ourselves that whether we believe them or not, the facts of the Christian Creed are true; and that faith only receives, but that it cannot possibly create or modify Christ and His gifts. Whether men believe or not in His Eternal Person, in the atoning virtue of His Death, in the sanctifying influences of His Spirit, in the invigorating grace of His Sacraments;—these are certain truths. They are utterly independent of the hesitations and vacillations of our understandings about them. To ourselves, indeed, it is of great moment whether we have faith or not: to Him, to His truth, to his gifts, it matters not at all. "The Lord sitteth above this waterflood" of our changing and inconstant mental impressions; "the Lord remaineth a King for ever."<sup>2</sup> If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself."<sup>3</sup>

Let this, then, be our Easter work; to forget ourselves, if we can; to gaze on the Wounds, to clasp the Feet of our Redeemer. Water cannot rise above its level; and if the soul of man is to be restored, it must be from without. It cannot

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xviii. 25, 26.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xxix. 10.<sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 13.

be from within. Left to itself, the soul lacks the light, the strength, the impetus which it needs ; it finds them in the Eternal Christ. It can, by faith, gaze on Him even now. It can, by faith, handle Him and discern that He is Man as well as God, God as well as Man, even now. Let us associate ourselves with that company in the upper chamber. Many of us share their trouble ; why should we be denied their consolations ? To our weakness, to our fears, to our indolent despair, to our barren self-complacency, He says, "Behold My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself : handle Me, and discern." Away, brethren, with the illusions which may have kept us from Him ! Let us arise, and live.

## SERMON XIX.

### THE PEACE OF CHRIST.

ST. JOHN XX. 19.

*The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.*

THIS was our Blessed Lord's fifth appearance on the day of His rising from the dead. First, He had met some devoted women, in the early morning, as they were on their way to tell the disciples that the sepulchre was empty. He met them, saying, "All hail;" and they in their joy held Him by the Feet and worshipped Him.<sup>1</sup> Next, somewhat later, He appeared to Mary Magdalene in the garden, outside the sepulchre, which Peter and John had just left. She knew Him by His way of pronouncing her name, Mary; she would have seized Him in her ecstacy, but He said, "Touch Me not."<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, in the afternoon He joined two sad travellers, walking along the road to Emmaus,<sup>3</sup> and after they had poured out to Him their tale of disappointment and perplexity,—disappointment at the seeming failure of their hopes for the redemption of Israel, and perplexity at the strange rumours which had reached them as to what had happened in the morning of the day,—He first interested them by showing how all that had occurred was in accordance with prophecy, and then He revealed Himself to them in the Sacrament of His love, and vanished from sight. On their return to Jerusalem they found that at some earlier hour He had appeared to St. Peter alone;<sup>4</sup> but of this fourth apparition no details are preserved. And now the evening had come. The story of the empty grave had made its way, no

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 9.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 13-31.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xx. 14-17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 33, 34.

doubt before this, very widely in Jerusalem, and had produced its effect upon the passions of the great and upon the passions of the multitude. The official explanation was circulated without loss of time; what had happened was represented as a pious fraud on the part of the disciples. But there must have been many men who repeated this, and who tried to persuade themselves of its truth by a process of constant repetition while at heart they suspected something else. They felt that the antecedents of the Prophet of Nazareth made something else at least possible. They knew that His immediate followers were men with no resources at command, no skill or craft of purpose, no social influence. Still there was the empty grave; it had been emptied in some way, that was certain; it might after all have been emptied by some unearthly power. Who could say? This sort of suspicion would probably have haunted the brain of many a Jew; and any such suspicion would of course have made the religious system or creed which occasioned it an object of fear, of suppressed, unacknowledged fear, of fear which tried to evaporate in expressions of affected contempt, but which obstinately survived the experiment. And fear, we all know, is wont to be cruel. Especially fear of an unknown religious influence is apt to be cruel beyond other varieties of fear; it has been guilty of some of the worst crimes that have disgraced human history. The disciples would have been well aware of the strength and character of this public feeling in Jerusalem; so they naturally kept themselves out of sight; they did not wish to provoke violence by showing themselves at nightfall in the public streets. Thus they were assembled in an upper room, mainly for fear of the Jews, when "Jesus came and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

He came; they knew not how; they knew only that the chamber was strongly secured against intrusion or surprise. No bolt was withdrawn; no door was opened; no breach was made in the wall of their place of assembly; there was no visible movement as from without to within, or from point to point. One moment they were, as they thought, alone; and the next, they looked, and lo! an outline, a Form, a visible Body and Face, a solid human frame was before them, as if created out of the atmosphere which they breathed. "Jesus came, and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." They gazed at Him; they gazed at each other in bewilderment and terror. They supposed that they had seen a

“spirit;”<sup>1</sup> they were with difficulty reassured—so St. Luke’s report seems to imply—by the means which our Lord took to convince them that a body of flesh and bones was before them. At last they were glad when they saw the Lord.<sup>2</sup>

Brethren, it would be interesting to dwell at length on the character of our Lord’s Easter appearances, as illustrating the nature of His Presence in the Christian Church; but this would not leave us time for considering the words which He uttered; words which are always full of comfort and invigoration for Christians, but especially so in connection with the yearly festival of the Resurrection. Jesus said, “Peace be unto you.”

# I.

Peace be unto you! Remark that this greeting was customary among the Jews and other Eastern nations in that age. It was, with slight variations, of high antiquity. With a like expression the steward of Joseph’s house calmed the anxiety of his master’s brethren,<sup>3</sup> and Jethro gave his permission to his great son-in-law to revisit Egypt,<sup>4</sup> and Eli soothed the troubles of the sorrowing Hannah,<sup>5</sup> and Jonathan concluded his pathetic compact with David.<sup>6</sup> With a like greeting David’s young men were instructed to preface their demand on the churlish sheep-farmer, Nabal, on Mount Carmel,<sup>7</sup> and David himself was recognised as king in the review of the forces at Ziklag,<sup>8</sup> and Absalom was empowered to pay the vow in Hebron, the pretext that veiled his plans for rebellion,<sup>9</sup> and the Syrian Naaman, who after his cure in the waters of the Jordan had returned to make his acknowledgments to the prophet of Israel, was dismissed by Elisha.<sup>10</sup> “Peace be unto thee,”—“Go in peace,”—the expression is varied according to the circumstances of the person addressed. If a psalmist is blessing the holy city he exclaims,

“Peace be within thy walls,  
Prosperity within thy palaces.  
For my brethren and companions’ sakes  
I will now say, Peace be within thee.”<sup>11</sup>

Even the heathen kings of the East had learnt this language. Achish dismisses David from Gath, where the jealousy of the Philistine lords made his presence unsafe, with “Go in peace;”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 37.

<sup>4</sup> Exod. iv. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. xxv. 6.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Kings v. 19.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xx. 20.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Sam. i. 17.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Chron. xii. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Ps. cxxii. 7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xliii. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xx. 42.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Sam. xv. 9.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Sam. xxix. 7.



Nebuchadnezzar prefaces his proclamation to his subject states by the words, "Peace be multiplied unto you."<sup>1</sup> When the jailer at Philippi tells Paul and Silas that the magistrates had ordered their release, he desires them to depart, and go in peace.<sup>2</sup> When St. James is describing, not without irony, the conduct of rich Christians, who are full of sympathy for the poor and do nothing to help them, he makes them say to the objects of their sterile compassion, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled."<sup>3</sup>

Thus observe, first, that this invocation of peace, at beginning or ending of intercourse, was already ancient. Next, that in our Lord's day it had become just as much part of the social habits of the people as the custom of saying "Good-morning" is among ourselves. All the Semitic peoples, the Syrians, the Arabians, and, as we know from the Talmud, the Jews of the Dispersion, used it as a matter of course. In earlier days, no doubt, men had invoked peace from heaven with the utmost deliberation and seriousness. In the age of the kings and prophets the phrase had still a living meaning: the speaker had actually prayed for the blessing of peace on the person whom he addressed. It is a gradual process by which the real fresh language of primitive times is stiffened into the unmeaning forms of the society of a later age; but as far as this expression is concerned, the process was already complete in our Lord's day. And yet He did not scruple to avail Himself of the conventional phrase. When He dismissed the woman with the issue of blood, who had cured herself by touching Him in the crowd, He bade her "go in peace."<sup>4</sup> When He blessed the Magdalene, who had washed His Feet in the house of Simon the Pharisee, "Thy faith hath saved thee," He said; "go in peace."<sup>5</sup> He instructed His disciples on entering a house to say, "Peace be to this house."<sup>6</sup> And His Apostles continue the language of their Master. St. Peter closes his First Epistle with "Peace be with all that are in Christ Jesus;"<sup>7</sup> St. John writes to Gaius, "Peace be to thee;"<sup>8</sup> St. Paul wishes peace to the brethren at Ephesus,<sup>9</sup> peace to those who walk according to the rule of the Cross, in Galatia.<sup>10</sup>

But it would be a great mistake to infer that because our

<sup>1</sup> Dan. iv. i.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. 36.

<sup>3</sup> St. James ii. 16.

<sup>4</sup> St. Mark v. 34.

<sup>5</sup> St. Luke vii. 50.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. x. 5.

<sup>7</sup> 1 St. Pet. v. 14.

<sup>8</sup> 3 St. John 14.

<sup>9</sup> Eph. vi. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Gal. vi. 16.

Lord and His Apostles used conventional language, they used it conventionally. A conscientious man in all ages will do what he can to mean all that he says, even when he uses words which are prescribed by custom or etiquette. And among the great men who have appeared in different ages as teachers of mankind, the majority have been less forward to employ new language than to breathe a new meaning into old words. In Him Who was no mere man, our Lord Jesus Christ, this latter method is especially observable. He picks up, as it were from the road-side, the common words and phrases which fall from men as they saunter unthinkingly through life; and He restores to this language its original power, I might say its original sanctity, as the native product of an immortal soul. He invigorates the form, from which during the lapse of ages its meaning has evaporated, with a new spirit. "Peace be unto you." No doubt many a Rabbi used that phrase, before and after, in the schools of Jerusalem, as the mere symbol of a self-respect which prudently respects others in daily intercourse. But, be sure, no one word of Jesus Christ was merely conventional, from His first lisplings in infaney until His last charge on the Mount of the Ascension. His work was to bring reality in all its shapes into human life; reality in dealing with God, with other men, with self; reality in thought, in conscience, in the exercise of the affections, and, as Isaiah had especially foretold, in the use of language.<sup>1</sup> Once before, in the supper-room, He had used words which rescued the blessing of peace, as uttered by Himself, from the unmeaning formalism of the society of the day. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."<sup>2</sup> And when He stood among His Apostles, on the evening of the day of His return from the habitations of the dead, it was with a fulness of meaning—such as the phrase had never had before—that He uttered His "Peace be unto you."

The word which is translated "peace" does not, in the original, mean only or chiefly rest, or the absence of disturbance. The Hebrew root-word means *whole, entire*; it is applied to a person or thing which is as it should be according to its origin or capacity. Of this state of wellbeing, freedom from disturbance is either a condition or a result. Yet here, as so often else in the history of language, the incidental meaning of the word has permanently displaced the original;

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxxii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 27.

and we translate it by an expression which never suggests to us English the idea of completeness, but only that of tranquillity or rest. But when our Lord, speaking as He did in Syro-Chaldee, used the word, He had His eye no doubt, at least partially, on its original sense. He meant not merely tranquillity, but that which leads to it. He meant wellbeing ; and wellbeing not in any of the contracted and earthly senses which limit it to the things of this life, but wellbeing in its largest sense, as affecting the highest interests of a being like man.

## II.

Peace be unto you ! What would have been the sense suggested by the blessing to those who heard it in the upper chamber ?

Not, Peace with the Jews without ! That could not be. Of the relations between His followers and the world which rejected Him our Lord had said, "Think ye that I am come to send peace on earth ? I tell you, Nay ; but rather division."<sup>1</sup> His followers indeed were, in Apostolic words, so much as lieth in them, to live peaceably<sup>2</sup> with all men. But this region of possible intercourse could only extend where the truths of faith were not imperilled ; no loyal soldier of Christ might for a moment affect indifference to the claims of the Faith. Peace with the Jews at that time, like peace with the non-Christian world in later ages, was only to be had by an unqualified surrender of the honour and cause of Christ. And therefore it was impossible.

Nor, secondly, as it seems, did He then mean, Peace among yourselves ! Doubtless the blessing of peace among Christians is of priceless value ; for its own sake, as involving the best spiritual blessings to those concerned, and as an evidence to the world of the truth of our Lord's Religion. "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one towards another."<sup>3</sup> But this peace was not then especially needed ! The instinct of self-preservation drew and kept together the hearts of the servants of the Crucified. The sad day of divisions among Christians was yet to come : for a while the first believers were of one heart and of one soul, and

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xii. 51.<sup>2</sup> Rom. xii. 18.<sup>3</sup> St. John xiii. 35.

had all things common.<sup>1</sup> It was otherwise, even before the Apostles had left the earth. "I hear," writes St. Paul to the Corinthians, "that there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it."<sup>2</sup> The endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace<sup>3</sup> was scarcely less difficult in the later Apostolic age than it is now. But on the day of the Resurrection the disciples had met as do members of a family under the pressure of a great anxiety. There is no thought of division, when hearts are simultaneously open to those fears, hopes, sympathies, which really take possession of the soul.

The gift which our Lord breathed on the assembled disciples was peace in their individual souls. It was a sense of protection which conquers or ignores fear. There they were, when He appeared, huddled together for fear of the Jews. The Jews, they knew, were outside, seeking an opportunity for arresting, insulting, prosecuting, murdering them. They could hear, perhaps, the discordant cries of the fierce and cruel fanaticism which is always ready to urge forward a religious persecution; and which is ostentatiously brutal, or ostentatiously decorous, according to circumstances. They knew what measure had been dealt to their Master. What could they, His disciples, expect? Had not he forewarned them in His Agony: "If they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"<sup>4</sup> and did not that saying apply in its degree to themselves, as more directly and overwhelmingly to the people at large? They were agitated, convulsed, almost paralysed with fear. Any new tragedy was possible at any moment. And in view of this possibility, all was disquiet and confusion.

Then He came, they knew not how, the doors being shut, and said, "Peace be unto you." They had heard rumours of His Resurrection; but they had not realised what it meant. They did not think of Him as One Whom they would see again with their bodily eyes. They supposed, St. Luke reports, that they had seen a spirit. Our Lord told them to touch Him freely, and convince themselves that He was really a form of flesh and blood. He asked for some food, and ate it before them, with the same object. Then, as St. John tells us, He repeated the words a second time, "Peace be unto you." They knew now that He was there. And from His Lips the blessing of peace meant safety, in some way or other, from

<sup>1</sup> Acts iv. 32.    <sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xi. 18.    <sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 3.    <sup>4</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 31.

every adversary. They knew His love and His power. The Jewish persecutor might rage on ; the disciples heeded not. They were no longer alone. It was not that the old dangers had ceased ; but danger had lost its sway over their imaginations and their wills. He had lifted them into a new atmosphere of thought and feeling and resolve. He had given them His peace.

This is a primary effect of Christ's blessing of peace, whispered from age to age in the upper chambers of Christian souls. It distracts attention from things without. It does not destroy them. Sickness, death, the loss of friends, the opposition of those who have no true faith in and love for Jesus Christ, the bad tempers, the prejudices, the follies of those around us, the troubles and heartaches of the natural life, remain as before. But they no longer absorb attention. The eye of the soul is turned upward ; it is fixed on the Divine and the Eternal. These outward troubles still have their importance. But they are seen in their true proportions ; they do not obscure the higher realities. They are not feared. Jesus has said, Peace be unto you !

### III.

Peace be unto you ! Did this only confer freedom from anxiety on the waiting disciples ? " That we being defended from the fear of our enemies " should " pass our time in rest and quietness,"<sup>1</sup> is doubtless an integral part of the gift of peace. But it is not the only or the chief part of it. The root of peace is deeper. The soul must be resting on its True Object ; or the tumult within will continue in thought, in affection, in will, in conscience.

The Crucifixion of our Lord had thrown His disciples into the greatest mental perplexity. They had trusted that it had been He that should have redeemed Israel.<sup>2</sup> They had believed that God, remembering His mercy, had holpen His servant Israel, as He had promised to their forefathers,<sup>3</sup> by sending His Son. They had followed our Lord, with their eye upon the prophecies to which He constantly appealed. And although they had been often inappreciative, or even self-willed ; although they had mistaken earthly images for heavenly realities, and a

<sup>1</sup> Second Collect at Evening Prayer.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 21.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* i. 54, 55.



kingdom of sense for the kingdom which stretches away beyond the senses, but is not therefore the less real ; yet on the whole, they had gone on, putting their thoughts about Him into order, and preparing for a future which seemed glorious and imminent. Upon this state of mind the Arrest, the Crucifixion, the Burial, burst like a thunderbolt. True, prophecy had foretold it ; He Himself had foretold it. But the human mind has a strange power of closing its ear to the unwelcome when it is half-comprehended. To the disciples it seemed as if a dense impenetrable gloom had settled down upon all their hopes, or rather, as if their thoughts about their Master had been thrown into irremediable confusion.

This was their mental condition when, passing through the closed doors, He said, "Peace be unto you." His words describe the intellectual effect of His mere appearance. The sight of Jesus, risen from His grave, restored order to the thoughts of the disciples. The Crucifixion was no longer the ruin of their faith, if it was followed by the Resurrection. And here was the Risen One Himself ! The prophecies were consistent after all ; there was no longer a seeming contradiction between the Word of God and the verdict of experience.

This is still the work of Jesus in the world ; when He is recognised by souls, He blesses them with intellectual peace. Without Him the belief in a Holy God is embarrassed by the gravest perplexities. There is the world, said to be presided over by an all-good, all-powerful Being, yet full of suffering, and without any certain prospect of alleviation ; nay, worse still, full of sin, but without any appearance of remedy. Why are we here ? whither are we going ? what is the destiny of the beings about us ? are inquiries which a moral theism suggests, but which it cannot answer. All the great haunting questions about life and destiny are unanswered, to any real purpose, until Jesus appears. And He brings with Him, for those who will have it, intellectual peace.

It is indeed sometimes mistakenly supposed that a Christian knows no mental peace, but the peace of mental stagnation ; and that in order to be what is oddly called a thinker, a man must needs be a sceptic. It is of course true that a Christian is not for ever re-opening questions which he believes to have been settled on the authority of God Himself. And it may therefore be conceded that a sceptic considers a larger number of questions to be really debatable than does a Christian. But this is the only admission that need be made. To believe is



not to condemn thought to inertness and stagnation ; a man does not do less work at mathematics because he starts with holding the axioms to be beyond discussion. On the contrary, a fixed creed, like that of the Christian, imparts to life and nature such varied interest, that, as experience shows, it fertilises thought ; the human intelligence has on the whole been cultivated most largely among the Christian nations. Look at a mind like that of Pascal. His thought is not less active in all directions, because he believes that God has spoken, and that God's Word is sure. His serenity of soul is not less assured, because he is constantly inquiring, learning, comparing, analysing, inferring, objecting, concluding ; for him the great certainties do not change.

Reflect, again, that the disciples had, for the moment, by the death of Jesus Christ, lost the Object of their affections. How much they already loved our Lord they did not know until He was removed. Now that He was, as they thought, in His grave, they felt what He had been to them : they felt the void, the weary, restless void, of an aching heart. When then Jesus appeared He brought peace to their hearts. The wasting fever of unsatisfied affection no longer kept them in continuous restlessness. He appeared ; and "I have found Him Whom my soul loveth, and will not let Him go,"<sup>1</sup> was the feeling of each disciple. That feeling meant peace.

Who does not know how largely the peace of the soul depends on the due employment of the affections ? Mental satisfaction does not alone bring peace, if the heart remains unsatisfied. And that which satisfies the heart is beauty ; that Uncreated and Eternal Beauty of Which all earthly beauty is but the shadow. It is an instinctive perception of this which makes people marry early : they hope to find, in family life, the satisfaction of their affections, and the peace which that satisfaction brings. And, so far as anything earthly can satisfy a longing which is made for eternity, family life, under moderately favourable circumstances, gives them what they want ; gives it them in its measure, and for a time. Sooner or later trouble and death make havoc of this peace. Only one Being satisfies the affections in such sort, that the soul's peace is insured beyond risk of forfeiture. In Him we find that which we can love perfectly, perseveringly, without risk of disappointment. "Thou wilt keep him in

<sup>1</sup> Song of Solomon iii. 4.

perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee.”<sup>1</sup>

Another effect of our Lord's Crucifixion had been that it had disturbed all the plans for action and life which had been formed by the Apostles. They had gradually been learning to look forward to the establishment of a new kingdom upon earth, and to their own places in it, and their work for it. These visions of a bright future now seemed to have vanished beyond recall. The Apostles were like men who had just failed in business. For the moment, the sky is overcast; there is nothing to be done, nothing to be hoped for; all is despair. And the will, the energetic and sovereign faculty of the soul, suddenly set free from the tension of continuous effort, falls back upon itself, and becomes within the soul a principle of disturbance. No men know less of inward peace than the unoccupied. A leading secret of peace is work. When then our Lord appeared, with the words “Peace be unto you,” He uttered them because He restored to the disciples that sort of peace which comes with occupation pursued under a sense of duty. They had been a prey to all the miseries of hopeless inaction; in seeing Him they saw a career again open itself before them. They knew now that He was alive; that His Kingdom was still a reality, or rather, more a reality than ever before; and that in it they had each an assigned task, in the performance of which their peace of soul would be insured.

There are hundreds of persons in London who do not know what peace is, mainly because they have not enough, or rather anything, to do. They do not know how to get through the day, much less the week. They may have at command money, friends, amusements. But these things do not really secure peace of soul. And many a working man, who does not know how to get into the day what he has to do, supposes that the condition of these idle people is a thing to be envied. No mistake can well be greater. Depend on it, work guarantees the peace of the soul; because the soul must be active in some way, and work secures healthy action. The man who has no regular occupation has his mind and heart full of restless, impracticable, morbid thoughts and feelings, which are fatal to peace. “The happiest days of my life”—they were the words of one of the wisest of men—“have been those in

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xxvi. 3.

which I have had the most work to do, with fair health and strength to do it."

But the peace which man needs most especially, and which our Lord gives most abundantly, is that of the conscience. Did the Apostles as yet understand in detail how their Master would reconcile them to God? It is difficult to say. They knew that this reconciliation was, in some way, to result from His Mission and Life. They knew from the Law, under which they had been educated, that they were sinful; and that God was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.<sup>1</sup> In His last discourse our Lord had encouraged them to come to the Father by Him.<sup>2</sup> He had before spoken of giving His Life a ransom for many.<sup>3</sup> At the Institution of the Eucharist He had said, "This is My Blood, Which is shed for many for the remission of sins."<sup>4</sup> But if the violence of His enemies had indeed prevailed, this Redemption was a mere matter of phrase and conjecture; His Life was essential to the completion of His work. As for the disciples, they had for a while lost sight of Him. They knew not whether they were saved, after all. They had lost that peace which comes from a sense of union with God.

When then our Lord appeared with His "Peace be unto you," He restored peace, because He restored the sense, however indefinite as yet, of pardon for past sin, and of reconciliation with God. Without this there can be no true peace for the soul of man. "The heart," left to itself, "knoweth its own bitterness."<sup>5</sup> All have sinned;<sup>6</sup> and "the wicked are like a troubled sea."<sup>7</sup> Only in union with Jesus, the Perfect Moral Being Who reconciles to God, can the soul find that peace which a sense of being pardoned brings.

Perhaps no Christian, since the days of the Apostles, has illustrated the true peace of soul which Jesus Christ gives at Easter so fully as the great Augustine. Read that pathetic story of his early life which he gives in his Confessions. What a restless life was his before his conversion! The intellect tossed about on the waves of speculation, without solid hold on any one reassuring truth. The heart distracted between the ideals presented by false philosophies, and the ideals suggested by sensuality. The will unable to fasten on any serious duty; the victim of a feverish unsettlement, or of

<sup>1</sup> Hab. i. 13.    <sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 6.    <sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xx. 28.    <sup>4</sup> Ibid. xxvi. 28.

<sup>5</sup> Prov. xiv. 10.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. iii. 23.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. lvii. 20.

a capricious languor. The conscience profoundly stirred by the terrible conviction that the Son of Peace was not there, and alternating between the phase of insensibility and the phase of agony. Then came his conversion, and with it what a change ! Peace in his understanding, which now surveys, with a majestic tranquillity, the vast realms of revealed truth ; more penetratingly, more comprehensively, than any Christian since St. Paul. Peace in his heart, which now turns its undistracted and enraptured gaze upon the Eternal Beauty Who, as he says, is always ancient yet always young. Peace in his will, for which the problem of duty has been simplified : he knows what he has to do, and he does it with all his might. Peace in his conscience. There is no longer any sense of an inward fend with the Law of Absolute Holiness. All has been pardoned through the Blood of Jesus ; all is possible through His grace.

Brethren, what do we know of this Easter peace ; this peace of mind, of heart, of will, of conscience ? Let us not mistake for it some false peace ; mere brute insensibility of soul, which will only last so long as health lasts, and will desert us in the closing scene. We need a peace which the world cannot give. We need this prerogative gift of Christ ; His great Easter blessing. We have seen it in others ; but we cannot analyse it. It pervades their life, it plainly keeps their hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God. But in itself it passes understanding. Its presence is traceable in the quiet resolve which is never disturbed by the ever-varying circumstances of the passing years ; in the well-compacted harmony of the faculties ; in the undertone of thankfulness and praise which is proof against the tragical possibilities of the days to come. This peace is no more touched by the troubles of life than the depths of the ocean are stirred by the storm which sweeps its surface. This peace is an inalienable possession ; inalienable, except by the act of him who possesses, and who may, of course, forfeit it. Let us pray God, if in His mercy He has given it us, that we may keep it to the end. Let us pray Him, if as yet He has for our sins withheld it, that He will, for His Blessed Son's sake, crown our festival with this priceless blessing.

## SERMON XX.

### THE MODEL OF OUR NEW LIFE.

ROM. VI. 4.

*That like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father,  
even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

EASTER DAY is like the wedding-day of an intimate friend : our impulse as Christians is to forget ourselves, and to think only of the great Object of our sympathies. On Good Friday we were occupied with ourselves ; with our sins, our sorrows, our resolutions. If we entered into the spirit of that day at all, we spread these out, as well as we could, before the dying Eyes of the Redeemer of the world ; we asked Him, of His boundless pity, to pardon and to bless us. To-day is His day, as it seems, not ours. It is His day of triumph ; His day of re-asserted rights and recovered glory ; and our business is simply to forget ourselves ; to intrude with nothing of our own upon hours which are of right consecrated to Him ; to think of Him alone ; to enter with simple, hearty, disinterested joy upon the duties of congratulation and worship which befit the yearly anniversary of His great victory. "This is the day which the Lord hath made : let us rejoice and be glad in it."<sup>1</sup>

Such are the first thoughts of loyal and loving Christians : but they are not exclusively encouraged by the Apostles of Christ. Our Lord does not really end His work for us on Calvary ; He does not suffer for us, and triumph only for Himself. We have a share in His triumph not less truly than in His sufferings :—

"Thou knowest He died not for Himself, nor for Himself arose,  
Millions of souls were in His heart, and thee for one He chose :

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxviii. 24.

Upon the palms of His pierced hands engraven was thy name,  
He for thy cleansing had prepared His water and His flame.  
Sure thou with Him art risen; and now with Him thou must go  
forth,  
And He will lend thy sick soul health, thy strivings might and  
worth.  
Early with Him thou forth must fare, and ready make the way  
For the descending Paraclete, the third hour of the day.”<sup>1</sup>

Not other than this is the language of St. Paul. If Christ died for us, He rose for us too. If He died for our sins, He rose again for our justification.<sup>2</sup> If He is our model in His death, He is also our model in His Resurrection from the dead. “We have been buried with Him,” says the Apostle, “by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”

## I.

“Like as—even so.” St. Paul’s words will suggest to a great many minds a question which must here be answered. What is the connection, they will say, between the raising Christ’s Body from the dead, on the one hand, and our “walking in newness of life” on the other? Material things may be compared to material; spiritual things to spiritual; the resurrection of one body to the resurrection of another; the conversion of one soul to the conversion of another. But if you pass these limits; if you compare a transaction in the world of spirits, as is a moral renovation, to a transaction in the world of sense, as is the resurrection of a corpse, do you not get forthwith into the region of the arbitrary and the fanciful? May you not, upon such vague principles of comparison as this, compare anything you like to almost anything else? and is not your comparison at best rather an ingenious exercise of the inventive fancy than a serious assertion of any real connection between two very dissimilar facts? This is probably the kind of question that is raised in the prosaic and realistic, or, as it would term itself, the practical mind of our day: and we do well therefore at once to ask, What is that common point between Christ’s Resurrection on the one hand, and the “newness of a Christian life” on the other, which St. Paul probably has in his thoughts, and which serves to explain his language?

<sup>1</sup> *Lyra Innocentium.*

<sup>2</sup> Rom. iv. 25.



The answer is, that the source, the motive power of the two things,—of Christ's Resurrection, and of the Christian's new life,—is one and the same. They are equally effects of one Divine agency. They belong indeed, themselves, to two different spheres of being. But that does not interfere with the fact of one common cause lying at the root both of one and the other. St. Paul glances at this truth when he prays that the Ephesians may know "what is the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, according to the greatness of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead."<sup>1</sup> Why should God's power, as shown to us Christians, be thus in correspondence with the power which He wrought at the Resurrection of Christ? Why? Because the same Divine Artist shows His hand in either work: because the Resurrection of Christ is in one sphere what the Baptismal New Birth or the Conversion of a Soul is in another; because the manner and proportion of the Divine action here at the tomb of Christ, where it is addressed to sight and sense, enables us to trace and measure it there in the mystery of the soul's life, where it is for the most part addressed to spirit.

May not something of the same kind be observed in the case of the human mind? Our faculties, indeed, are very limited; and a mind capable of writing a great poem, or history, or work of fiction, and also of governing a great country, is not often to be met with in the page of history. Business capacity is often fatal to literary skill; men who write books are as a rule unpractical. But when we do find the two things combined in a royal author, or in a literary statesman, it is reasonable to compare the book with the policy of the king or the minister, on the ground that both are products of one mind. And it is further reasonable to expect that, allowing for the great difference of circumstances under which books are written and government is carried on, there will be certain qualities, evidently common to the two forms of work; that the book will sometimes recall the statesman, and the public policy of the country will be now and then more intelligible when placed in the light of some marked peculiarities of the author.

Such as this is St. Paul's position when he makes a comparison between Jesus Christ Risen from the grave, and a soul walking in the newness of its life. Both are the works of a single Agent; of one Powerful, Wise, and Loving Will. "The

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 19, 20.

glory of the Father," which is said to have raised Christ from the dead, means the collective perfections of the Godhead ; the Love, Justice, and Wisdom, as well as the Power of God. St. Paul, indeed, in several places speaks of Christ's Resurrection as the work of the Father ;<sup>1</sup> St. Peter, as the work of God, at least in two.<sup>2</sup> But this does not exclude the agency of Christ's Own Divine Power in His Resurrection. Had He not said of His Body, that if this Temple were destroyed, in three days He would raise it up ?<sup>3</sup> Had He not proclaimed, that as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will ?<sup>4</sup> Was He not announcing Himself, on the very eve of His sufferings, to be majestically free whether in life or death ? "No man taketh My Life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself ; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."<sup>5</sup> Do not Scripture and the Creeds alike state that Christ *rose* from the dead the third day ; meaning that He was not simply passive, that in some sense the act of resurrection was His Own ? The great Apostles, then, cannot be understood to ascribe Christ's Resurrection to the Father in such sense as to exclude the agency of the Son or of the Spirit. St. Paul's point is, that the Resurrection is a Divine work, and as such it occupies common ground with the new birth or conversion of a soul.

For, indeed, no truth is more clearly revealed to us than this, that spiritual life, whether given us at our first new birth into Christ, or renewed, after penitence, in later years, is the free gift of the Father of all spirits, uniting us by His Spirit to His Blessed Son. Nature can no more give us newness of life, than a corpse can rise from the dead by its unassisted powers. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."<sup>6</sup> A sense of prudence, advancing years, the tone of society around us, family influences, may remodel the surface form of our daily habits. But Divine grace alone can turn the inmost being to God ; can "raise it from the death of sin to the life of righteousness," can clothe it in that new man "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."<sup>7</sup>

Reflect, brethren, on the reality of spiritual death, linked as it often is in one and the same man, as if by a ghastly ligament, to the highest animal and mental life. The body is in the full flush of its powers ; the mind day by day plays lightly over the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 4 ; viii. 11 ; Gal. i. 1.<sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 24, 32.<sup>3</sup> St. John ii. 19, 21.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. v. 21.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. x. 18.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. iii. 6.<sup>7</sup> Eph. iv. 24.

surface, or grapples earnestly with the substance, of a thousand topics. But the spiritual self is, to all intents and purposes, dead ; and neither boisterous animal spirits nor intellectual fire can galvanise it into life. The spiritual senses do not act : the spiritual world is as if it did not exist. The eye of that soul is closed ; it sees in spiritual truth only diseased imaginations or needless scruples. Its ears are closed : Christ and His Apostles are to it only like any other talkers in the Babel of human tongues. Its mouth is closed : it never speaks to God in prayer, or to man in faith and love. Its hands and feet are tightly bandaged in the grave-clothes of selfish habit ; it cannot rise ; it cannot engage in works of benevolence and mercy for the love of God ; it must lie on, in the darkness and putrefaction of its spiritual tomb ; while death, as the Psalmist says, gnaweth upon it.<sup>1</sup> And a great stone has been rolled to the door of its sepulchre ; the deadweight of corrupt and irreligious opinion which bars out from it the light and air of heaven, and makes its prison-house of death secure. How is such a spell and encumbrance of death to be thrown off, if no help, no motive quickening power come from on high ? Even if angels should roll away the stone, how can life itself be restored, unless He Who is its Lord and Giver shall flash into this dead spirit His Own quickening power, and bid it see, and hear, and walk, and work, and feel, and rejoice in its returning life, and go forth to brace its strength, and assert its liberty ?

Yes, this is the deepest common point between Christ's Resurrection and the conversion of souls : both are wrought by the same Divine Artist. And of the two works, the soul's conversion is the greater triumph of His Power ; since the matter of a dead body cannot, like the perverse will of a dead soul, hinder the energy of life-giving grace. Can we go further, and trace God's creative hand in any common points of likeness between the Risen Life of Jesus Christ upon the earth, and the newness of life of a regenerate or penitent Christian ?

## II.

Speaking roughly, then, there are three characteristics of the Risen Life of our Lord which especially challenge attention, as corresponding to certain features of the new life of Christians.

1. Of these the first is its reality. The Resurrection of Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xlix. 14.

Christ was the real resurrection of a really dead Body. The piercing of our Lord's Side,<sup>1</sup> to say nothing of the express language of the Evangelists, implied the truth of His Death.

And being thus truly dead, He really rose from the dead. As St. Luke says, "He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs."<sup>2</sup> Men have thought to effect a compromise between their own unbelief and the Apostolical language, by saying that Christ rose in the hearts of His disciples. It has been said that the idea entertained by the disciples of the character and work of their Master was too bright and glorious a thing to be buried in His grave, and that when the first agony of grief was past, the Crucified One presented Himself again to their imaginations arrayed in even more than His ancient beauty. But, supposing a process of imagination such as this to have taken place in the case of one or two minds, is it reasonable to suppose that it can have taken place in a great many minds and at the same time? Are men frequently able so to persuade themselves of the truth and reality of the unreal and the untrue, as to stake everything, to work and to die for their persuasion of its truth and reality? Certainly St. Paul had no shadow of doubt that the Body of Jesus literally rose from His grave.<sup>3</sup> How did St. Paul come to believe that? A modern writer, who denies the Resurrection because he denies that any miracle is possible—a position which is really atheistic—frankly admits that he is entirely unable to account for St. Paul's conviction; nor can that conviction be really accounted for, except by our supposing that it was warranted by fact. And as it was not the idea of Christ that rose, but Christ Himself; so when He rose, it was not as a phantom. "He truly rose again from death, and took again His Body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature."<sup>4</sup> Had it been only a phantom that hovered around the precincts of the Sepulchre, or in the upper chambers of Jerusalem, or on the hill-sides of Galilee, it would assuredly have been found out. It would have been found out by the keen-sighted love of the Magdalene, or by the three holy women, or by the eager, searching anxiety of Peter, or by the disciples on the Emmaus road, or by the ten gathered at night in the upper chamber. In our day probably men would be as little disposed to believe in a risen phantom as in a real resurrection. It was not so eighteen centuries ago; and our Lord

<sup>1</sup> St. John xix. 34.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, 11, 15, 17, 20.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Art. III.

was pleased to provide especially against this particular mistake. When the eleven at Jerusalem supposed that they had seen a spirit, and cried out for fear, "Behold," He said, "My Hands and My Feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."<sup>1</sup> With the same motive, He asked for and ate on this occasion a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.<sup>2</sup> And when St. Thomas had protested that he at least would not believe that the Resurrection was real unless he could test it by his senses of sight and touch, our Lord deigned to satisfy him. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold My Hands; reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My Side: and be not faithless, but believing."<sup>3</sup> We know the result. The nearer men came to the Risen Jesus, the more satisfied they were that He had risen indeed. Undoubtedly when risen, His Body possessed new qualities of subtlety and splendour, which had not belonged to It before the Resurrection: He vanished out of sight at Emmaus:<sup>4</sup> He appeared at Jerusalem in the midst of the disciples when the doors were shut.<sup>5</sup> But these higher endowments did not destroy the reality of the Resurrection: the Body Which rose was the Body Which had been crucified. It had been sown in dishonour: It was raised in glory: It had been sown in weakness: It was raised in power.<sup>6</sup> It was the same Body, but glorified.

So it is with the soul: its newness of life must be, before all things else, real. What avails it to be risen in the imagination and good opinion of others, if in fact we still lie in the tomb of sin? What profits it to be like the Angel of the Church of Sardis, in having a name that we live, while yet we are dead?<sup>7</sup> Were it not better for us, if we are dead, that men should think and speak of us as being what we are? Is it well for a dead soul to be periodically galvanised by unmerited flattery into awkward mimeries of the language and action of the Christian life? And, even if our new life be not altogether imagined for us by others, what is the value of the mere ghost of a moral renewal; of prayers without heart, of actions without a religious motive, of religious language far in advance of our true convictions and feelings? Shadowy phantoms of a renewed life stalk through the world and the Church: they have a spiritual picturesqueness in the distance; they are often so like the real,

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 39.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 42.<sup>3</sup> St. John xx. 27.<sup>4</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 31.<sup>5</sup> St. John xx. 19.<sup>6</sup> I Cor. xv. 43.<sup>7</sup> Rev. iii. 1.



that, as though we were visiting wax-works, we find it hard to distinguish between the living and the dead. There is the phantom-life of imagination ; when a lively fancy has thrown around the history, or practices, or literature, or services of religion, the charm of an absorbing interest, without, however, touching religious principle ! There is the phantom-life of strong physical feeling ; when occasional bursts of religious passion are mistaken for discipline and surrender of the will. There is the phantom-life of sheer good nature ; when, although much is done for the public service, there is no inward reference to God and His Law. There is the phantom-life of good taste ; when it is simply taken for granted that certain religious proprieties belong to a particular social position. Phantoms these—the corpse which they represent still lies on in its sepulchre. Phantoms ! for they melt into thin air, when some harder stress of service or of sorrow is laid upon them. They may not challenge investigation with the “Handle Me and see” of the Risen Jesus : they could not bear that probing of the wounded hands and of the pierced side which was invited in the upper chamber. To come near them, it may be, is to be disillusionised : it is to experience the reverse of that which the Queen of Sheba expresses at the court of Solomon ; it is sadly to learn that distance, reputation, our own wishes or fancy, had lent enchantment to a form which in itself was without substance and reality.

Brethren, the first lesson which the Risen Christ teaches the Christian is reality, genuineness. Try to feel more deeply than you talk ; try to act as you feel in your best and highest moments. Do not in your new life, dally with old thoughts, old associations, old and known sources of danger,—the grave-clothes which are left in the tomb of sin,—the bandages which fetter the liberty of a risen life. For “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us : therefore let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness ; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”<sup>1</sup>

2. A second characteristic of Christ's Risen Life,—it lasts. Jesus did not rise, that, like Lazarus, He might die again. “I am He”—so ran the message to St. John in Patmos—“That liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of hell and of death.”<sup>2</sup> “For evermore.” No new life upon the earth to be followed by a death of pain and

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 18.



shame, no new victory over the tomb awaited Him. Sin was conquered once for all. Christ's triumphant Life in the glory of God the Father could not again be exchanged for a state of suffering. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over Him. 'For in that He died, He died unto sin once : but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.'"<sup>1</sup>

So with the new life of the Christian. It should be a resurrection once for all. I say, "it should be." God's grace does not put force upon us. What He is to do in us and for us depends in fact upon ourselves. The Christian must "reckon himself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord."<sup>2</sup> And if this seems hard to flesh and blood, he will remember that we have forces at command which are able to cope with flesh and blood ; that if "the Spirit of Him That raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, He That raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by His Spirit That dwelleth in us."<sup>3</sup> If Christ, the Risen Christ, be in us, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life, because of righteousness.<sup>4</sup> Have these words of the Apostle lost their force? Surely not: numbers of Christian hearts will thankfully attest their undying power. They will say with David, "As for me, I am like a green olive-tree in the house of God : my trust is in the tender mercy of God for ever and ever."<sup>5</sup> They will say with St. Paul, "Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand."<sup>6</sup>

Does this mean that the Christian escapes all sin whatever ; that his life is a literal and absolute transcript of the Life of the sinless Christ? On the contrary, in "many things we offend all."<sup>7</sup> "If we" Christians "say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>8</sup> But the new life of the Christian is like the Risen Life of Christ in this ; that it is at least "undefiled and innocent from the great offence."<sup>9</sup> It escapes from those capital and deadly falls whereby the soul forfeits life and liberty, and is consigned once more to the chambers of the dead.

Are we then to suppose that the Christian is guaranteed against any such falls by the gift of a grace which cannot but

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 9, 10.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 11.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. viii. 11.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 10.<sup>5</sup> Ps. lii. 9.<sup>6</sup> Rom. v. 1, 2.<sup>7</sup> St. James iii. 2<sup>8</sup> 1 St. John i. 8.<sup>9</sup> Ps. xix. 13.

insure his safety? Certainly not. In giving us His grace, God does not annihilate our moral freedom : our probation does not end at baptism, or at conversion. There is no such thing in the kingdom of grace as a talismanic insurance against eternal loss. Even St. Paul feared lest after all his years of service he might fail at last. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."<sup>1</sup>

What is certain is that, once risen with Christ, we need die no more. On His side God will certainly be true. We have but to look to Him ; to cling to Him ; to watch, suspect, keep a tight hand upon ourselves. We have a moral, as distinct from a material, assurance of continued perseverance in spiritual life. Nothing from without can avail to destroy our life, if it be not seconded from within. "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>2</sup>

Many of us may have heard of the great French monarch who reigned two centuries ago, going through his Lenten and Easter duties with even passionate fervour, and then falling back in the later spring into his old debaucheries. Certainly it was a hideous libel upon the teaching of Christ's Resurrection. Yet what if, with far fewer and slighter temptations than his, we too, on a less historical and public scene, repeat his experiences ! Do not numbers of Christians complain that their new life is so insecure and feeble that they seem to tremble, day by day, upon the brink of another moral sepulchre ? Who can marvel at this, or at much besides, if they persistently haunt the infected precincts, and breathe the atmosphere of corruption, in the perilous hope that a half-voluntary death may yet be followed by a fresh spiritual resurrection ? Surely "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." If our new life is to be like His, we may not doubt His grace and His power, but also we may not tamper with that which cannot be consented to without forfeiting it.

3. A third note of Christ's Risen Life. Much of it—most of it—was hidden from the eyes of men. They saw enough to be satisfied of its reality. But of His eleven recorded appearances, five took place on a single day : and there is

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. viii. 38, 39.

accordingly no record of any appearance on thirty-three days out of the forty which preceded the Ascension. Certainly St. Luke implies that our Risen Lord was constantly seen by His Apostles at other times, when He communicated to them the laws of His future kingdom.<sup>1</sup> But, allowing for these undescribed appearances,—Christ's Risen Life, as a whole, is veiled in silence and mystery. After the Resurrection His visible Presence is the exception rather than the rule. If we omit the walk to Emmaus, and to the Mount of the Ascension, there are no records of His movements in detail; nothing like the journeyings of the days of the Ministry. He seems to belong already to another world. He is now in one place, now in another; here, in a secret gathering in Jerusalem, there, on the shore of the Galilean lake. He appears and He is gone; He vanishes and He is heard of elsewhere; His disciples cannot trace His steps, yet they are ever prepared for Him; a Stranger, they think, will meet them by the way, Whom yet they know; or, out of the clear air into which they gaze will presently appear the outline of His loved and glorious Form, and a Voice of blessing and comfort will fall on their ears—a Voice which could be none but His.

By all this the Apostles were gradually educated for the future which was before them. The great forty days were a time of transition from one relation towards Christ our Lord to a new and distinct relation. It was a gentle passage from the everyday, active, and uninterruptedly Visible Presence of the days of Christ's ministry to the days of His Invisible Presence in the Pentecostal Kingdom; of that Presence which was to last to the end of time, and which we enjoy at this hour.<sup>2</sup>

And yet we cannot help asking, What was the Risen Christ doing during these long absences from His disciples? Ah! what? Who can doubt? Certainly He needed not strength, as we need it; but communion with the Father was His glory and His joy. And can we here fail to see a lesson and a law for all true Christian lives? Of every such life, much, and the most important side, must be hidden from the eyes of men. It is a matter of the first necessity to set aside some time in each day for secret communion with Him, in Whose Presence we hope to spend our eternal future. Doubtless our business, our families, our friendships, our public duties, have their claims. In many a life, such claims may leave only a scanty margin for anything beyond. But where there is a will there

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 20.

is a way : and time must be made for secret earnest prayer, for close self-questioning, for honestly examining all that touches our present condition, and our tremendous destinies, for planting our foot, humbly, yet firmly, upon the threshold of Eternity. Alas ! for those who shrink from solitude, who live only on the surface of life, who find in the uninterrupted whirl of pleasure or of business a refuge from the solemn, yet friendly, voice that speaks in the soul's inner chambers. Alas ! for those who know so little of the true source of our moral strength, as to see in such earnest communion with God only the indulgence of unpractical sentiment ; and thus fail to connect these silent hours with the beauty and vigour of many of the noblest and most productive lives that have ever been lived in Christendom.

Does not the forest tree, while flinging trunk and branches high towards the heavens, strike its roots, for safety and for nourishment, ever deeper into the soil beneath ? And is not this parable of nature interpreted by the highest lesson of grace ; by the example of our Lord and Saviour in the days of His Resurrection glory ?

What multitudes of men and women day by day throng the aisles of this Cathedral between its services, to marvel at the genius of our great English architect, or to gaze at the memorials of the famous dead ! Would that of these some at least might be found to use it as being what it is, a House of Prayer, a place of welcome retreat from the torrent of care and business which surges unceasingly around its walls ! Would that here too, men to whom time is money, might, in view of their eternity, come apart for a short while, to claim high fellowship with their Risen Lord ; to brace themselves for their work, their sufferings, their unknown future : for all that may be in store for them between the moment which is passing, and that other inevitable moment, of such unspeakable solemnity to each and all of us, when this world will be already fading from their sight !

In these three respects, then, at least, the true Christian life is modelled upon the Resurrection. It is sincere and real : it is not like a taste or a caprice, for it lasts ; it has a reserved side, apart from the eyes of men, in which its true force is nourished, and made the most of. Each Easter, we may trust, some additions are made from the ranks of indifference, or from the ranks of sin, to that band of servants of the Risen Jesus, whose lives are modelled on His. God

grant that it may have been so this year ! We sorely need such reinforcements to the Christian army, for the sake of the Church and of the country. It is by really risen lives that languishing Churches are invigorated, and that a visible advance in society of moral corruption and decay, ever pregnant with coming disaster, is most surely arrested. And this is the day of the Resurrection, when all who sleep in sin are bidden with a solemnity that is ever new to rise from the dead that Christ may give them light,<sup>1</sup> when all who have risen are warned to keep their eye upon His Life Who is the Model, as He is the Lord, of Christians.

For this first Resurrection is not, as Hymenæus and Philetus thought, the only one.<sup>2</sup> It will be followed by another, and our place in that second and literal rising from the dead depends upon our share in this. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first Resurrection : on such the second death hath no power."<sup>3</sup> Time is passing : each year, as it escapes us, adds, to use St. Cyprian's beautiful phrase, to "our store in Paradise." Since this day last year, it may be, many of us have parted with those, to part with whom has been to change the whole face of life, and to make the present more unlike the past than it ever, we feel, can be unlike the future. The sorrows of life would be more than we could bear, if in very deed we had no future ; if there were really nothing to uphold us beyond a few broken lights playing fitfully, as if in cruel mockery, upon the walls of our earthly prison-house. But our sorest losses matter not, if, as we know, death is but the gate of Life, and Christ the true Monarch of that happier world which lies beyond it. Only may He, by His supernatural grace, endow us poor sinners, in this present life, with some rays of the moral and spiritual lustre of His Own glorious Resurrection, and so hereafter "change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the mighty working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eph. v. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Rev xx 6.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18.

<sup>4</sup> Phil. iii. 21.

## SERMON XXI.

### SEEKING THINGS ABOVE.

COL. III 1.

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*

THE Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the grave speaks both to the understanding and to the heart, but it speaks, first of all, to the understanding. In days like ours, when the minds of men are much exercised about the grounds of faith, the Resurrection has come into the same sort of prominence in Christian teaching that it occupied in the very first days of the Christian Church. It is the great occurrence which beyond any other in human history proves that Christianity is from God. Christ Himself appeals to it as the certificate of His claims : His Apostle stakes the whole case of Christianity upon its literal truth : “If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain ; your faith is also vain.”<sup>1</sup> But the Resurrection has a moral and devotional aspect too : it is at once the pattern of a true Christian life, and the force which invigorates it. “Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so ye also should walk in newness of life.”<sup>2</sup> According to St. Paul, those great mysteries of our Lord’s Life, His Death, His Burial, His Resurrection, are not to be looked at as merely events external to Christians, which took place in a distant country, and in an age long past : they were repeated in the soul of each sincere convert who sought Christian Baptism. First of all, the old sinful nature was crucified : “We are crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”<sup>3</sup> Next, the soul was “buried with Him in Baptism :”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 4.



hidden away, as it were, in the tomb of Christ from the associations of its old life ; living a life that was hidden with Christ in God. Thirdly, the soul was raised to a new level of faith and practice, of thought and feeling, which is called "newness of life." The likeness of Christ's Death was to be followed by the likeness of His Resurrection :<sup>1</sup> the power of His Resurrection was to assert itself in a movement ever victorious and upward, whereby the soul, while yet on earth, incessantly sought its true and eternal home. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Risen with Christ ! What a life does not the expression suggest for us, poor sinful men ! The Apostle, it seems, thinks of Christians as leading a life like that of our Lord during the forty days that elapsed between His Resurrection and His Ascension into heaven. He had left His tomb, and He was seen again and again by Apostles and disciples, and friends and brethren. And yet between each appearance there were long intervals, during which He was withdrawn from sight, and preparing for the last triumphs of the Ascension. They who had seen Him never knew when He might not without warning appear again ; on the sea-shore, or in the private chamber, He might show Himself without visibly approaching them. He was waiting still on earth until He had given His last instructions, and had completed the due measure of proofs that He was in truth alive. But He was but pausing. His Eye was ever upwards ; He was seeking "things above ;" the "throne on the right hand of the Majesty on high,"<sup>2</sup> the manifested "glory which He had with the Father before the world was."<sup>3</sup> And Christians who have part in His Resurrection-life will be looking onwards and upwards too. They too will seek things above ; and they will prosecute this search by a triple effort ; an effort of the understanding, an effort of the affections, and an effort of the will.

# I.

"Seek those things that are above." This is the business, first of all, of the understanding ; of the understanding of a Christian who has risen with Christ.

Among certain words which of late years have come to be employed in a narrow and inaccurate sense, there is the word

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 4. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. i. 3.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xvii. 5.

"thinker." It is so used as to imply that only those men think at all, who bring their reasoning faculties to bear on the solution of abstract problems, and who give proof of this by their lectures or their books, or by some one of the customary means of securing intellectual notoriety. If this restricted use of the word were correct, the thinkers would certainly constitute a very small and select class indeed : but in truth it would be just as reasonable to confine the thinkers to this restricted class, as to say that a working man is only a man who works with his hands and muscles, and not a man who works with his brains. All human beings, who are in possession of their faculties, are, in some degree, and very seriously, thinkers. Thought is not only or always the exercise of reasoning power : it observes, it contemplates, it measures, it examines, as well as, and before, it, properly speaking, reasons ; nay, in a large number of human beings it never gets beyond these earlier processes, and yet it would not be true to say that they do not think. In truth the understanding is in action whenever any object is presented to it ; and some object is present to every understanding during each of its waking moments. This is not the less true because the understanding often apprehends that which is before it in a confused and indistinct manner ; or because it apprehends several objects at once, with the result that they present to it a blurred and indefinite whole. It is with the eye of the mind as with the eye of the body. If I walk down a London street, my eye rests upon a great number of human beings, and on a great variety of inanimate objects ; and the successive images are not less real because they succeed each other so rapidly, and no one is distinguished from the rest without some deliberation and effort. So it is with the mind. It is not bereft of thought, or, as is contemptuously said, vegetating, because it is not keenly conscious of each step of its advance ; the understanding is always resting upon something with whatever degree of deliberation ; and this process is, properly speaking, thought : it is not the less thought because it does not go on to draw inferences and construct arguments any more than a limb in motion is less a moving limb, because it is not engaged in some gymnastic feat requiring both strength and practice.

We are all of us, then, properly speaking, at least in this sense, thinkers ; and thus the solemn question arises, "What do we think about ?" What are the objects on which our thought rests, when it is free and at our disposal ? For with

many of us, during a great part of the working day, there is, of course, no choice as to the direction of our thoughts. We are obliged to throw them as completely as we can into our business, if we mean to get through it ; if we mean to satisfy our employers or our consciences, and to do our duty by those who depend on our conscientious industry. To give your mind to what you have in hand is the first condition of all good work : and we may be very sure that when St. Paul was a tent-maker,<sup>1</sup> he did give his whole mind to the work of making tents, as if there was, for the time being, nothing else to be done in the wide world. But then there is a fixed hour at which business ends ; and you regain, with the liberty of movement, the liberty of thought. What do you habitually think about, when there are no demands upon you, when you are necessarily alone, when neither friends nor books put in a claim which has to be attended to ? What do you think about, when you make no effort to think, when thought follows its own course, as if it were a natural force ; in the hours of solitude, in the hours of darkness ? The question is not unimportant. For the instinctive direction which thought takes at such times may tell us much about our real selves ; about the path along which we are travelling towards eternity ; about the judgment which is already forming with respect to us in the Mind of God.

Is it not the case, brethren, with many of us, that at such times thought is occupied with much which, to say the least, does not guide it heavenward ? It is almost at the mercy of the first claimant. It is weighted with the importunity of sense ; it is dissipated or distorted by the exigencies of passion ; it is darkened by resolute avoidance of the face or even of the idea of God. What mean those long periods, in lives which were surely destined for better things, in which thought persistently haunts questions and subjects which a higher judgment condemns ; in which it beckons

“foul shapes in dream intense,  
Of earthly passion ;”

in which it eagerly welcomes some work of fiction which, under the pretence of describing an historical period, suggests almost at every page that which it does not dare describe ? What mean those long hours, or days, or months of sullen moodiness ; in which the mind broods with desperate self-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 3.

degradation over some trifling or imagined wrong ; in which, as it surveys some real or supposed opponent, no excellence is recognised, and no failure unnoticed or unexaggerated ; in which life is embittered for all around, but for none half so terribly as for the man himself whose thought is thus discoloured by selfish hate ? Or what shall we say of those minds, too numerous, alas ! in our day, who only raise themselves above the mire and dust of earth to think of God as the capricious or heartless Master of their destinies ; who trace Him everywhere in life as “an austere man, reaping where he had not sown, and gathering where he had not strawed :”<sup>1</sup> who would with their own hands paint clouds over the face of the All-Merciful, and then complain that He is what they themselves have endeavoured to make Him ?

It is sometimes supposed that, if thought is only active, it must needs be good : that it is only when it stagnates that it breeds the deadly mischiefs which degrade the soul ; that thought in motion is like running water, ever transparent and ever pure. Far be it from any of us to refuse honour to those who by vigorously exerting their reason honour the Creator in using one of the noblest of His gifts : but do not let us suppose that, because they so far escape a merely animalised existence, they necessarily raise either themselves or others. For thought may be exercised upon subjects which assuredly degrade it, and which therefore degrade it in the very ratio of its activity. The more resolutely a thinker thinks who believes that all that exists is really resolvable into matter and force, the more surely must his thought be itself materialised : the harder he works the deeper he buries himself in the thick folds of matter : nay, perhaps he even ends by proving to himself that the conditions under which, and the results with which, he thinks are such as to make any thinking at all a waste of energy.

Easter then is surely a summons to thought : and it bids thought rise heavenward with the rising Christ. The Resurrection is not merely a symbol ; it is the warrant as well as the pattern of this mental resurrection. By rising from the grave Jesus Christ has made it possible for man to seek things above, as never before. Before He rose men had thought and written about another world ; sometimes under the guidance of the earlier Revelation which was made to Israel, sometimes by the light of the natural reason, which was the guide to the peoples

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxv. 24.

of heathendom. But at best the veil was only half withdrawn ; there was no clear light, no working and recognised certainty, nothing that would stand the wear and tear of discussion, of passion, of trouble, of life. Men hoped and guessed ; but nature with its sullen uniformities was too much for them. When thought would rise to the world beyond, nature seemed to frown discouragement, and thought shrank back and buried itself, with pathetic despair, in the dust of earth. But Jesus rose from the grave in which they had laid Him, and all was changed. His Resurrection was a sensible interference from a higher world with the laws and rules of this : it broke in upon the stern order of decay and death, which thus became a foil to its own immense significance ; it proved to the very senses of men that there is a life beyond the grave, and a heaven, into which they whom we name the dead may really enter. And it bade thought rise with the rising Christ ; not merely into the new and glorious earthly life which preceded the Ascension, but also into that world beyond the stars into which He passed in order to prepare a place for us.

Seek then in thought those things which are above. Seek the conversation of the wise and the instructed ; study the masterpieces of literature ; make the most of whatever enlarges and ennobles the conception of nature and of human life. In all the higher and purer regions of thought, you are nearer Christ, even though His Name be not uttered. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report ; think of these things."<sup>1</sup> Even if they do not bear His Name they are assuredly His. But, as you seek, let your cry be ever *Excelsior*. Rest not in the highest earthly excellence. Be not satisfied until you have struggled beyond literature, beyond science, beyond nature, into that world which human thought may enter under the guidance of Revelation ; into that kingdom of heaven, which, since the Redeemer died and rose, has been opened to all believers, and in which He, the King of Glory sits, ceaselessly adored by tens of thousands of the highest intelligences, and ennobling human thought even by the distant sight of transcendental truth. "Seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv. 8.



## II.

“Seek those things which are above.” This is the business, not merely of the understanding, but of the affections.

The affections are a particular form or department of desire : and desire is the strongest motive power in the soul of man. Desire is to the soul what the force of gravitation is to a material body. Thus it is that when we have ascertained the objects upon which desire is set, we know the direction that a soul is taking. If these objects are in heaven, the soul is moving upwards and heavenward : if they are on earth, the soul follows ; it is sinking downwards. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”<sup>1</sup> Desire is the raw material which is fashioned on the one hand into covetousness, or ambition, or sensuality, and on the other into the love of God : it becomes of this or of that complexion according to the object it pursues. Thus, St. Augustine has finely said, “Whithersoever I am being borne, it is love that bears me :” “Quocunque feror, amore feror.” “If I am borne upward, it is by the Love of the Highest Good : if I am carried downward, it is by corrupt or perverted desire ; by desire which has attached itself to false or unworthy objects, but which nevertheless overmasters my movement as a spiritual being.” In this sense St. James says that “desire, when it is finished, bringeth forth sin :”<sup>2</sup> sin is the act whereby perverted desire attains its object. Desire was indeed meant to attach the soul to God, the Highest Good, by a spiritual attraction that should keep it, though in its freedom, true to its centre, just as the planets move ever round their central sun. And sin resembles those catastrophes which might result if it were conceivable that a planet should leave its orbit and dash wildly into space, amid stars and worlds which it could only approach as the messenger of disorder and ruin. Sin is the product of unregulated desire : and in the right control and direction of desire lies the wellbeing of human life.

Now, as has been said, the affections are a particular department of desire. God gives to every human being a certain measure of affection. No man is altogether, at first, without this precious gift. It is dealt out by us, partly to those whom providence has appointed to receive it ; to a father and a mother, to brothers and sisters, to those loved ones whom our

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. vi. 21.

<sup>2</sup> St. James i. 15.



earliest memories associate with home. It is also expended on objects which in our freedom we choose to be its recipients. For we may spend our natural store of affection as we will. We may squander it on the pleasures of sense, or we may compress it into high self-sacrifice. But spend it as we will, we cannot both spend and keep it; we do not spend it twice. When it first flows forth from the pure open heart in the early morning of life it seems to defy exhaustion. But since the being who loves is finite, the supply is really limited. And the despair of those who have given their best or their all at the bidding of some unlawful pleasure is to find, while life is yet young, but all too late, that the heart may be like a dried-up spring, from which the stream of love will no longer flow. One of the notes of the degraded heathen in St. Paul's day was that they were without natural affection.<sup>1</sup> One of the notes which he foresees in the apostate Christians of the last days is that they too will be without natural affection.<sup>2</sup> Already the world is a great exhibition of hearts which have spent their store of love, and cannot escape from the wasting fever which preys upon the very force that feeds it; ay, that "wasting fever of the heart," which is almost worse than the moral death of which, if unassuaged, it is the assured presentiment.

"Seek then," with your affections, as with your understanding, "things above." As truth is the prize of the understanding, so beauty is the prize of the heart. Let the Eternal Beauty woo and win your hearts. Earth has less beauty than truth to offer you. In that higher world there are many objects, many beings well worthy of enthusiastic love; pure intelligences that stand before the Most Holy, strong in a rectitude which has been proved and has endured. In that world, we may be very sure, there are sights and sounds, things and beings, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.<sup>3</sup> But there is One above all others, Who has claims such as no other can have on the affections of the human heart. How He lived on earth, and what He said and did, and how and why at last He died, we know from His Gospel. None other such as He has worn the human form; none other has invited and drawn towards Himself the unstinted homage of millions of hearts, who love Him better and more perfectly as they know Him more. For to love Him is to love a Being Who sustains love; Who responds

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 31.<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 3.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 9.

to it by pouring in new supplies, that both replenish its source and enhance its volume: "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given unto us,"<sup>1</sup> and thus "grace" is with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.<sup>2</sup> And for this among other reasons did He rise from His grave, that He might draw the affections of man upward, from earth to heaven, and so might lead them to gravitate surely towards Himself; the only Being in loving Whom the heart can never incur risk of exhaustion or of disappointment.

### III.

"Seek those things which are above." Here is, lastly, a command addressed to that sovereign faculty, the will.

We need not discuss the question whether the will is a distinct faculty of the soul, or whether it is merely desire informed and guided by intelligence; in other words, a result of the combined action of the two powers which we have already considered. For, practically speaking, nothing depends on the settlement of this question one way or the other. We know what the will is in each one of ourselves, whatever may be the true analysis of its ingredients. We know that there is at the centre of our being a power which rules all others, which chooses, and refuses, which precipitates and holds back; a power which, while professing obedience to reason, not seldom arranges its premises and even settles its conclusions, and which gives play to affection or restrains it, almost at discretion; a power in which every soul recognises the seat of empire, if man be indeed master of himself, and not the slave of necessity or of nature. Yes; it is not reason, it is not feeling, it is will which in the last resort rules the soul, and by which therefore the great question of its destiny must be decided. And therefore it is to the will that the Apostle says; O ruler of man, "seek those things that are above." Grant that the will is weakened by an inheritance of moral disease, this weakness has been corrected at least in those who are risen with Christ. He has washed them with His Blood, and poured into them, by His Spirit, His justifying and invigorating grace, so that they can do as they list, if they only have the heart and loyalty to do it. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "through Christ that strengtheneth me."<sup>3</sup> Away with the faint-hearted and false notion that religious effort is after

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. vi. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. iv. 13.

all an affair of temperament ! Natural disposition may make things easy or difficult : but it cannot either prompt or arrest the onward upward movement of a free because regenerate will. We Christians seek things above or things below, at our discretion : we have been made masters of ourselves by Christ ; and we cannot shift the responsibility which attaches to us, by putting it upon the very circumstances which are placed within our control.

“Seek those things that are above.” Never in our busy human life is this advice unneeded, but surely it is especially to be borne in mind by Christians at a time like the present, when all thoughts and hearts are full of the stirring and eventful incidents of a great struggle between political parties.<sup>1</sup> Far be it from me to say that for those who take part in such a struggle as we have been witnessing there are not high and noble ends to be pursued ; claims of justice, promptings of conscience, requirements of principle which do certainly ennoble it, and which all the higher natures that engage in it keep before their eyes, whatever be the dust and tumult that surrounds them. But for the majority of men, is it not too often otherwise ? Personal antagonisms, disappointed or gratified ambitions, the excitement of mere change, the satisfaction of envy or of discontent ;—these, from the nature of the case, do largely enter into every such contest. And most men who are deeply committed to it, and who observe narrowly what takes place within themselves, would confess that on such occasions it is easier to lose moral ground than to gain it. At any rate, it must be well for us Christians to recall at a time like this the Apostolic warning : “Seek those things which are above.”

Serious as are the issues when a great people has taken into its hands the task of deciding upon the control of its future destinies, they are infinitely little when placed in the light of the Eternal World. What shall we think of all that is passing now, when we look back on it, one hundred, or fifty, or twenty, or ten, or five years hence, from our place beyond the veil ? It will only interest us so far as it has borne upon our personal discharge of a single duty. Our highest wisdom, even now, is to look beyond it, into the heights and depths of that future and unending Life, which is the true goal of our existence ; and which, if we are indeed risen with Christ, we shall assuredly seek more earnestly and constantly than anything else or less that can engage our attention.

<sup>1</sup> Preached in the middle of the General Election, April 1880.

## SERMON XXII.

### FAITH'S CONQUEST OF THE WORLD.

I ST. JOHN V. 4.

*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.*

OUR Lord's triumph over death naturally leads us to think of its more striking consequences ; and among these the conquest of human nature by the Religion of the Cross was certainly not the least. Just as in the famous song, after the deliverance from Egypt, which Moses and the children of Israel sang, and to which Miriam responded,<sup>1</sup> the thought passes almost at once from the discomfiture and ruin of Pharaoh to the already foreseen conquest of Canaan ; just as in the twenty-second Psalm, which is in fact a picture of the Passion, David, after noting the relief of the Ideal Sufferer, adds that "all the ends of the world shall remember themselves, and be turned unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him :"<sup>2</sup> so in the New Testament accounts of our Lord's Death and Resurrection, and of the events which followed, the same order is observed. The great conquest of death on Easter morning is quickly followed by the slow but progressive victory of the Apostles over the opposition and prejudices of an unbelieving world. And the instrument whereby this victory was secured is precisely stated : it is the faith of Christians. This faith is spoken of indeed, not merely as the means of victory, but as already in itself a victory over human blindness and prejudice : "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

There are many words and phrases in the Bible which have

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xv. 1-22.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xxii. 27.

lost their force by being misapplied or vulgarised ; and "the world" is one of these. At certain periods of life, all men speak of "the world" as something with which *they* have nothing to do, and which does not understand them. They have spent their whole time and strength in the pursuit of honours, or of wealth, or of pleasure. But in the hour of trouble, of failure, of disgrace, they talk of the hard judgments of the world, of the world's want of sympathy, of the falseness and fickleness of the world, just as if they had never had any part in the habits of life and thought which breed these qualities. Again, persons who belong to a very small clique or sect do sometimes bring themselves to think of all other Christians as making up the world in the sense of St. John ; and thus it has come to pass that in consequence of this misuse, the expression, notwithstanding its high authority, at least in its original sense, has been tacitly discredited. Too often we think of "the world" as representing no serious and undoubted reality, but only different objects of a capricious condemnation, varying with the persons who may happen to name it. The "world," it has been suggested, is a religious term suited to express dissatisfaction with those sections of the community with which the speaker does not happen to be in sympathy. Thus the word is either dropped or is retained in a sense which is anything but condemnatory ; one might suppose at times that it had somehow been transfigured since the days of St. John. We talk commonly of the religious world, the Christian world, even of the clerical world ; and when these adjectives are wanting, the world seems to be a thing of at least neutral tint ; the ideas which attach to it in the New Testament have disappeared ; and we all speak of our place in it, and of our deference and duties towards it, without suspecting that, as St. John says, it is something not to be acquiesced in, but to be overcome.

## I.

Now the first question before us is, What did St. John mean by the "world" ?

The old Greeks had employed the very word which St. John here uses, to describe the created universe, or this earth, in all its ordered beauty : and the word often occurs in this sense in Holy Scripture. When, for instance, St. Paul says, that "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are



clearly seen,"<sup>1</sup> he plainly means by the world the material universe. When St. Paul tells the Athenians of "God That made the world and all things therein,"<sup>2</sup> or when St. Peter, describing the flood, says, that "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished,"<sup>3</sup> both Apostles are thinking of this earth ; this corner of God's universe which is the home of us men. But neither of these senses can belong to the word in the passage before us. This material world is not an enemy to be conquered ; it is a friend to be reverently consulted, that we may know something of the Eternal Mind That framed it ; "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handy-work ;"<sup>4</sup> and "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."<sup>5</sup> How could faith possibly be the victory that overcometh such a world as this ? The natural world is itself a revelation of God ; it is not faith's foe, it may well be faith's support.

Does St. John then mean by the world the entire human family ; the whole world of men ? We find the word, undoubtedly, used in this sense, also, in the Bible. When our Lord tells His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world ;"<sup>6</sup> or when He says, that the field in which the Heavenly Sower sows His seed is the world ;<sup>7</sup> or when He cries, "Woe to the world because of offences ;"<sup>8</sup> or "I am the Light of the world ;"<sup>9</sup> or "I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him ;"<sup>10</sup> He means human beings in general. And this sense is even more apparent in St. Paul's description of the public estimate of the Apostles : "We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all men unto this day"<sup>11</sup>—where "all men," for so it should be rendered, and "the world" are clearly parallel expressions. And the Pharisees, as reported by St. John, use the word "world" in this sense of "everybody ;" when, referring to our Lord's popularity, they cry, in their vexation, "Behold, the world is gone after Him."<sup>12</sup> This use of the word is popular as well as classical : it is found in Shakespeare and Milton ; but it is not St. John's meaning in the present passage. For this world, which thus comprises all human beings, included the Christian Church and St. John himself. Whereas the world of which St. John is speaking is plainly a world with which St. John

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 20.<sup>2</sup> Acts xvii. 24.<sup>3</sup> 2 St. Pet. iii. 6.<sup>4</sup> Ps. xix. 1.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xxiv. 1.<sup>6</sup> St. Matt. v. 14.<sup>7</sup> Ibid. xiii. 38.<sup>8</sup> Ibid. xviii. 7.<sup>9</sup> St. John viii. 12.<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 26.<sup>11</sup> 1 Cor. iv. 13.<sup>12</sup> St. John xii. 19.



has nothing to do ; a world which is hostile to all that he has at heart ; a world to be overcome by every one that is born of God, by St. John himself, and by the Christians whom he is addressing.

In this passage, then, the world means human life and society, so far as it is alienated from God, through being centred on material objects and aims, and thus opposed to God's Spirit and His kingdom. And this is the sense of the word in the majority of cases where it occurs in the writings of St. John. This is the world of which our Lord said to the Jews : "The world cannot hate you, but Me it hateth."<sup>1</sup> This is the world of which He observed that "it could not receive the Spirit of truth."<sup>2</sup> This is the world with whose gift of false peace to its votaries He contrasted His Own : "My peace I give unto you : not as the world giveth, give I unto you."<sup>3</sup> This is the world of whose prince our Lord said, "he hath nothing in Me."<sup>4</sup> Respecting this world, He warned His disciples : "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own : but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."<sup>5</sup> To this world He referred in His Intercessory Prayer : "I pray not for the world, but for them that Thou hast given Me. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."<sup>6</sup> This is the world which St. John bids us not to love ;<sup>7</sup> which, as he proclaims, passes away, with the desires thereof ;<sup>8</sup> which is, in its essence and active movement, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ;<sup>9</sup> which, he says, lies, as a whole, in wickedness ;<sup>10</sup> and which "whatsoever is born of God overcometh."<sup>11</sup> This world, according to St. Paul, has a spirit of its own, opposed to the Spirit of God ;<sup>12</sup> and there are "things of the world" opposed to "the things of God ;"<sup>13</sup> and rudiments and elements of the world which are not after Christ ;<sup>14</sup> and there is a "sorrow of the world that worketh death," as contrasted with a "godly sorrow unto repentance, not to be repented of ;"<sup>15</sup> so that, gazing on the Cross of Christ, St. Paul says "that by it the world is crucified to him, and he to the world"<sup>16</sup>—so utter is the moral separation between them.

<sup>1</sup> St. John vii. 7.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiv. 17.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 27.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 30.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xv. 18, 19.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. xvii. 9, 14.<sup>7</sup> 1 St. John ii. 15.<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 17.<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 16.<sup>10</sup> Ibid. v. 19.<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 4.<sup>12</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 12.<sup>13</sup> Ibid. vii. 33.<sup>14</sup> Col. ii. 8 ; Gal. iv. 3.<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor. vii. 10.<sup>16</sup> Gal. vi. 14.

To the same purpose is St. James's definition of true religion and undefiled, before God and the Father ;—it consists not only in active philanthropy, but in a man's keeping himself unspotted from the world.<sup>1</sup> And there is the even more solemn warning of the same Apostle, “ that the friendship of the world is enmity with God.”<sup>2</sup>

## II.

This body of language shows that the conception of the world as human life, so far as it is alienated from God, is one of the most prominent and distinct truths brought before us in the New Testament. The world is a living tradition of disloyalty and dislike to God and His kingdom, just as the Church is or was meant to be a living tradition of faith, hope, and charity ; a mass of loyal, affectionate, energetic devotion to the cause of God. The world is human nature, sacrificing the spiritual to the material, the future to the present, the unseen and the eternal to that which touches the senses and which perishes with time. The world is a mighty flood of thoughts, feelings, principles of action, conventional prejudices, dislikes, attachments, which has been gathering around human life for ages ; impregnating it, impelling it, moulding it, degrading it. Of the millions of millions of human beings who have lived, nearly every one probably has contributed something, his own little addition, to the great tradition of materialised life which St. John calls the world. Every one too must have received something from it. According to his circumstances the same man acts upon the world, or, in turn, is acted on by it. And the world, at different times, wears different forms. Sometimes it is a solid, compact mass ; an organisation of pronounced ungodliness. Sometimes it is a subtle, thin, hardly-suspected influence ; a power altogether airy and impalpable, which yet does most powerfully penetrate, inform, and shape human life.

When the Apostle St. John spoke of the world, he was no doubt thinking of it generally as an organisation. The world of the Apostolic age was the Roman society and Empire ; with the exception of the small Christian Church. When a Christian of that day named the world, his thoughts first rested on the vast array of wealth, prestige, and power, whose centre was at Rome. He thought of all that had made Egypt, and Assyria, and Babylon, and Tyre, to be what they had been,

<sup>1</sup> St. James i. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 4.

brought together on a larger and more splendid scale. He thought of the fleets in the Mediterranean ; of the legions on the Euphrates and the Danube ; of the great company of officials who administered the provinces and cities of the Empire ; of the merchants whose enterprises were carrying them even beyond the limits of the Roman rule ; of the numerous and powerful literary class, which set itself to educate taste, and to inform and control opinion ; of the immense slave population which ministered to the comfort and luxury of these masters of men ; and, above all, at the summit of the whole, of the Cæsar of the day, throned in a splendour and majesty, which seemed to other men even to transcend the limits of human existence. He thought of this complex yet organised mass of elegance, of brutality, of power, of degradation, of intelligence, of wealth, of hideous misery, which had been built up by the labour and suffering of an imperial race, during five centuries of vicissitude and effort ; and then his thoughts turned to the source and centre of this great organisation, to the Empire city, to Rome. Rome was the very core and essence of the world. To Rome all the streams of human effort converged ; from Rome they radiated ; within Rome were the minds and energies which impelled and controlled the vast machine of government ; at Rome was to be found the representative ability and the representative vice of the complex whole. When two Apostles sought a name with religious significance for Rome, they at once thought of that older seat of empire, which, in pride, and wealth, and oppressiveness, and ungodliness, was foremost in an earlier age of the world's history. Both St. Peter in his First Epistle,<sup>1</sup> and St. John in the Revelation,<sup>2</sup> salute pagan Rome as Babylon ; as the typical centre of organised worldly power among the sons of men, at the very height of its alienation from Almighty God.

The world then of the Apostolic age was primarily a vast organisation. But it was not a world that could last. "After these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen. . . . And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."<sup>3</sup> Alaric the Goth appeared before Rome ; and the city of the Cæsars became the prey of the barbarians. The event pro-

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. v. 13.<sup>2</sup> Rev. xviii. 2.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 1, 2, 4, 5.

duced a sensation much more profound than would now be occasioned by the sack of London. The work of a thousand years, the greatest effort to organise human life permanently under a single system of government, the greatest civilisation that the world had known, at once so vicious and so magnificent, had perished from sight. It seemed to those who witnessed it as though life would be no longer endurable, and that the end had come.

But before the occurrence of this catastrophe, another and a more remarkable change had been silently taking place. For nearly three hundred years the Church had been leavening the Empire. And the Empire, feeling and dreading the ever-advancing, ever-widening influence, had again and again endeavoured to extinguish it in a sea of blood. Among the great persecutors are the noblest as well as the most degraded of the Emperors : Nero, Domitian, Trajan, Hadrian, Marcus Aurelius, Septimius Severus, Maximinus, Decius, Valerian, Diocletian. Diocletian, who came last, was the most implacable ; and Diocletian failed. After Diocletian came Constantine. But from the year of the Crucifixion, A.D. 29, to the Edict of Toleration, A.D. 313, there were 284 years of almost uninterrupted growth, promoted by almost perpetual suffering ; until at last, in St. Augustine's language, the Cross passed from the scenes of public executions to the diadem of the Cæsars.

Yes ! by this wonderful change the Empire had become Christian ; and when it sank beneath the blows of the barbarians, the Christian Church, and it alone, remained erect. But meanwhile what had become of the world ; the world of St. John ? Had it ceased to be ? Was it banished utterly beyond the frontiers of triumphant Christendom ? Or had it taken a new form ? had it ceased to be an organisation, only to become a spirit, a temper, a frame of mind, a settled habit of thought and feeling more subtle, penetrating, and deadly than the organised world that had preceded it ?

Yes ! so indeed it was. The world had passed within the conquering Church. The world which early Christian writers such as Tertullian saw without the Christian fold, St. Bernard, and others long before him, detected within it. Even in St. Augustine's day the world had crowded, almost with a rush, within the Church. Emperors like Honorius, provincial governors like Marcellinus, successful generals like Bonifacius, were Augustine's fellow-Christians. The world now to a

great extent used Christian language, it accepted outwardly Christian rules. And in order to keep this world at bay, some Christians fled from the great highways and centres of life, to lead the life of solitaries in the Egyptian deserts ; while others even organised schisms, like that of the Donatists, which, if small and select, relatively to the great Catholic Church, should at least be unworldly. They forgot that our Lord had anticipated the new state of things by His parables of the Net<sup>1</sup> and of the Tares ;<sup>2</sup> they forgot that whether the world presents itself as an organisation or as a temper, a Christian's business is to encounter and to overcome it. The great question was and is, how to achieve this ; and St. John gives us explicit instructions. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

### III.

This is, I say, the question for us of to-day, no less than for our predecessors in the Faith of Christ. For the world is not a piece of the furniture of bygone centuries, which has long since perished, except in the pages of our ancient and sacred books. It is here, around and among us ; living and energetic, and true to the character which our Lord and His Apostles gave it. It is here, in our business, in our homes, in our conversations, in our literature ; it is here, awakening echoes loud and shrill within our hearts, if, indeed, it be not throned in them. Now, as of old, its essence is passionate attachment to the material and passing aspects of human life ; it is forgetfulness of the immaterial and imperishable realities. Do you want to know whether you love the world or not ? You need not love it because you are fond of natural objects, and spend much time in studying them scientifically ; they may well lead you up to God. You need not love it, if you have a true love of your fellow-creatures, and lose no opportunity of doing them any service that lies in your power ; this is not a temper which our Lord would condemn. But supposing, for instance, you belong to the middle classes in society, are you, above all things, anxious for a fortune, or for a social position which is at present denied you ? Do you spend much time and thought on the question how to make money, and how to get on in social life ? Do you experience disappointment when others succeed ; when they attain to wealth or to honours which you

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xiii. 47-52.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 24-30, 36-43.



think are rightfully your own? Do you think slightly of those who are below you, while you make great efforts to stand well with those who are above you? Does a slight cause you keen distress, and a little flattery, whether sincere and deserved or not, great satisfaction? Do you measure men, not by what they are in point of character, but by their titles and incomes; by what they are called or have? and do you convey this fatal estimate of life to those who are in contact with you? If so, be your position what it may, you are in league with the world. It has its grip upon you; and its prince is your ruler more entirely than you think. And be sure, that if you do not break away and overcome it, it will drag you deeper and deeper down; it will dim the eye of your soul till you see no spiritual truth distinctly; it will chill your heart till you feel no pure and generous affection stir within it; it will unnerve your arm, and make your will falter, for all action that is unselfish and high-minded; at least when the time for action comes. And therefore, "whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;"<sup>1</sup> as a man fighting for his life, a Christian conquers this passion for materialised existence; he conquers it not as a pastime, but as a condition of his spiritual safety.

Is the world-temper to be overcome by mental cultivation?

We live in days when language is used about education and literature, as if of themselves they had an elevating and transforming power in human life. In combination with other and higher influences, mental cultivation does much for man. It softens his manners; it tames his natural ferocity. It refines and stimulates his understanding, his taste, his imagination. But it has no necessary power of purifying his affections, or of guiding or invigorating his will. In these respects it leaves him as it finds him. And, if he is bound heart and soul to the material aspects of this present life, it will not help him to break his bonds. No doubt there are fine things in great writers about the unsubstantial and fugitive character of this life and its enjoyments. But we read; we admire; we assent; and we pass on; perhaps, with the observation that it is a striking passage. The illusion that there is a sort of moral or even sacramental force in literary pursuits, would never be cherished by any who have considered the history of literature. Polite learning is no monopoly of Christians; when St. John wrote, it could hardly be said to be possessed by them at all. Had Christians been dependent on their cultivation in St.

<sup>1</sup> : St. John v. 4.



John's days, they certainly would have had a poorer chance of conquering the world than had the Stoics, who were, some of them, very polished and cultured indeed.

Is the world then to be overcome by sorrow, by failure, by disappointment ; in a word, by the rude teaching of experience ?

Sorrow and failure are no doubt to many men a revelation. They show that the material scene in which we pass our days is itself passing. They rouse into activity from the depths of our souls deep currents of feeling ; and we may easily mistake feeling for something which it is not. Feeling is not faith ; it sees nothing beyond the veil. Feeling is not practice ; it may sweep the soul in gusts before it, yet commit us to nothing. Feeling deplures when it does not resist ; it admires and approves of enterprises which it never attempts. Consequently, self-exhausted, in time it dies back ; leaving the soul worse off than it would be, if it had never felt so strongly ; worse off, because at once weaker and less sensitive than before. It is piteous to think how many a disappointment, many a failure, many a sorrow, ends like this. If illuminated by faith, it might have raised the sufferer from earth to heaven ; but it has left him an enfeebled cynic, who has indeed found out much about the world that he knew not before, but who is much less able than he was before to overcome it.

Certainly, if the world is to be overcome, it must be, as St. John tells us, by a power which lifts us above it ; and such a power is faith. Faith does two things which are essential to success in this matter. It enables us to measure the world ; to appraise it, not at its own, but at its real value. It does this by opening to our view that other and higher world of which Christ our Lord is King, and in which His saints and servants are at home ; that world which, unlike this, will last for ever. A country lad may think much of the streets and homes of the little village in which he was brought up, until he has seen London. But when, after his first visit to this great city, he returns to his rural home, he learns to take a more modest and more accurate view of its architectural merits. The first step to overcoming the world is to have satisfied ourselves that all here is insignificant by comparison with that which will follow it. And faith opens our eyes to see this ; to see things as they really are ; to understand not only the origin of life, but also the true end of life, and the means whereby that end may be reached. When "the eyes of a man's understanding are thus enlightened that he may know what is the hope of his calling,

and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the saints,"<sup>1</sup> faith enables him to take a second step. Faith is a hand whereby the soul lays actual hold on the unseen realities ; and so learns to sit loosely to, and detach itself from that which only belongs to time. Especially are we nerved to overcome the world by faith in our Lord and Saviour, true God and true Man, for us men, Born, Crucified, Risen, Ascended, Interceding ; Who gave His Life for us on the Cross ; Who gives it to us by His Spirit, and in His Sacraments. It was not natural courage in the women and children, who yielded up their lives for Jesus Christ in the first ages of the Church, that made them more than conquerors ; it was that they saw and held fast to Him, Whose very Name their persecutors cast out as evil. It is not good taste, or common sense, or ripe experience, or culture and refinement, which will enable any man now-a-days to conquer the strong and subtle forces which play incessantly around his soul, and which will drag him downwards with fatal certainty, if he cannot counteract them. Only when we are one with Him against Whom the world did its worst, and Who bent His Head in death, ere by His Resurrection He overcame it, can we hope to share the promise of sitting with Him on His throne ; even as He Himself also overcame, and is set down with the Father on the Father's throne.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. iii. 21.

## SERMON XXIII.

### THE RAISER OF THE DEAD.

PHIL. III. 20, 21.

*The Lord Jesus Christ · Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.*

HERE we have one of those clear glimpses into the world beyond the grave, of which, after all, there are not many in the New Testament, and each of which is so dear to the faith and hope of a Christian. St. Paul had been speaking of some Christians whose interest was altogether centred in earthly things. Of these persons he says that their end in another life is destruction ; that their god, or object of devotion in this life, is their lower appetites, or, as he puts it, with Apostoheal plainness, their belly ; and that their glory, or subject of thought and conversation, is that which will hereafter be their shame. In contrast with this way of passing life, St. Paul describes the life of Christ's true servants. Their conversation, he says, or their citizenship, is in heaven. They have not yet reached their country ; they are only on the way to it ; but already, before they touch its shores, they have been invested with its rights of citizenship, in consideration of the commanding merits and self-sacrificing generosity of their Leader. They are in the position of emigrants for whom the friendly government of a colony should provide beforehand a home and civic duties. Heaven, then, as being already their country, naturally occupies a first place in their thoughts ; but they cannot set foot in it until a great change, a new and unimaginable experience, has passed over them. It is upon this change, and upon the Person of Him Who is to effect it, that their eyes are continually fixed while the present scene lasts. " We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ : Who shall change our vile

body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

Such a subject, my brethren, even if the daily lesson did not suggest it, connects itself naturally enough with Eastertide. Christ did not rise, as He did not die, only for Himself. He rose for our justification.<sup>1</sup> In this present life we share His righteousness, when He gives us His new nature. But the virtue of His Resurrection is not exhausted on this side the grave. It secures to us a bodily resurrection in glory, at some distant epoch, when all that now meets the eye shall have passed away. This is the last and most magnificent of the gifts of our great and Risen Redeemer; "He shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."

And death is throughout life so constantly dogging our footsteps that such a subject as this can never be uninteresting. How near any one of us might be to it, we may have noted only in yesterday's paper. There we read how a man whose devotion to geological science during many years has long since won for him a European reputation, and the beauty and simplicity, and, let me dare to add, the religious sincerity of whose character, have commanded the affectionate respect of a very wide circle of cultivated friends, passed two days since, by what we should call the most natural of accidents, out of the very midst of his intellectual interests into the world of the dead. None who knew the late Professor Phillips,<sup>2</sup> and understand the place he held in the world of thought as an honest and truthful student of nature, while firmly believing in man's spiritual destiny, will regard his death as other than a serious loss to the religion, as well as to the higher learning, of this country.

## I.

What is the nature of this change referred to in the text?

Observe St. Paul's way of describing the human body in its present stage of existence: "our vile body," or, as it would be more exactly rendered, "our body of humiliation."

The human frame appeared to Greek artists the most

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iv. 25.

<sup>2</sup> John Phillips, M.A., F R S., Professor of Geology at Oxford.

exquisite thing in nature : it was the form which seemed to them most nearly to unveil a Divine Beauty to the eye of sense. We know from their sculptures which have come down to us how fondly they studied it ; they have left in stone the splendid record both of their genius and of their enthusiasm. How impossible it is to imagine the phrase, "our vile body," upon the lips of the men who decorated the Parthenon ! Such a phrase belongs to another and a totally distinct world of feeling and of thought. It implies that the man who uses it has seen deeper and higher than the realm of sense. The Greek knew only this visible world, and he made the most of it. The Hebrew had had a revelation of a higher Beauty ; and when men have come into contact with the Eternal, they sit lightly to the things of time. The Greek was occupied with the matchless outline of the human form. The Hebrew could not forget that his bodily eye rested after all on a perishable mass of animated clay ; he could not but think of what was coming, of the decaying texture and substance of the flesh, of the darkness and corruption of the grave. So Isaiah : "All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field : the grass withereth, the flower fadeth."<sup>1</sup> So Job : "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery. He cometh up as a flower, and continueth not."<sup>2</sup> So the Psalmist : "As soon as Thou scatterest them they are even as a sleep, and fade away suddenly like the grass. In the morning it is green, and groweth up : but in the evening it is cut down, dried up, and withered."<sup>3</sup> So, quite in the Old Testament spirit, St. James : "What is your life ? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."<sup>4</sup> It is in the same sense that St. Paul says "our body of humiliation." The phrase embodies the mind of both Testaments : the body is destined to disease and death. Prophets and Apostles do not write as artists ; they are thinking of the eternal realities.

Not that this phrase implies any one-sided depreciation of the body, such as we meet with, for instance, in heathen ascetics. For Christianity here keeps a middle way between two opposite errors, which have distorted man's thought when he endeavours, apart from Revelation, to form a just estimate of his own being. On the one hand, the body has seemed to be the whole man, just as it does to our modern materialists ;

<sup>1</sup> Isa. xl. 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xc. 5, 6.

<sup>3</sup> Job xiv. 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> St. James iv. 14.

as though life must cease altogether with death, or after death be so attenuated into a purely shadowy existence as to lose all the importance of reality. On the other hand, the body has been treated as a mere incumbrance, having no organic relation to the complete life of man ; as the soul's prison-house ; as the chain which ties noble spirits down to the soil of earth ; as the mere instrument of a being who is complete without it, and who is not free until he has escaped from it. The moral effect of the first of these opinions is to encourage unbounded sensual indulgence, while it can be had, since such indulgence has no consequences in an after world, in which continued existence is held to be so enfeebled or so improbable. The moral effect of the second of these opinions is to encourage suicide ; since, if the alliance between soul and body is so disadvantageous and unnatural, the sooner we put an end to it the better.

Between these opposite exaggerations Revelation holds a middle course. According to the teaching of the Bible and the Church, although not always according to the teaching of particular persons who have professed to be guided by the Bible, the body is essential to man's completeness, whether in this or a future life. Pope's Ode to Immortality is conceived in the sense of Plato, not in that of the New Testament. According to Revelation, death is the disturbance of that union of soul and body which constitutes the complete man. Death therefore introduces a morbid condition of existence ; a strictly abnormal separation of the two constitutive parts of our being ; and this irregular interruption of the true life of man ends at the Resurrection, when man re-enters upon the original completeness of his existence. The body then, in the revealed doctrine about man, has all the honour which can belong to it, as a necessary part of man's nature. Although the body is not the seat of man's consciousness, it is the soil into which his conscious being strikes and takes root. We know not whether in this life the human spirit can work independently of the body,—of the brain. It may be so on extraordinary occasions, such as was St. Paul's ecstasy into the third heaven. As a rule it certainly is not so. The body asserts its importance, constantly, imperiously. Madness is a disturbance inflicted on the soul by a diseased brain ; and, in lesser ways, the body of every man forces his spirit to share its weakness. "The corruptible body" presseth down the soul ;<sup>1</sup> not merely staying the hand and silencing the voice, but impoverishing

<sup>1</sup> Wisdom ix. 15.



or arresting thought, and chilling affection, and paralysing will. So intimate and awful is the embrace, which, during this stage of our being, links soul and body together!

And yet, masterful as the body is, it is not the governing element in man's nature. Mark the phrase: "our body of humiliation." Man is something higher, nobler, than the animal form with which he is so intimately identified that it is part of himself. Man, in the eye of Revelation, as in reality, lives on the frontier of two vast and mysterious worlds; the world of pure spirits, and the world of animal existences. By his spiritual nature, or soul, he belongs to the ranks of angelic intelligences; they rise above him in tier beyond tier of being, upwards towards the awful throne of the Everlasting Father. By his bodily frame man belongs to the world of animal existences. They stretch away beneath his feet, some of them with such powers of association and instinct as to suggest the shadow of a spiritual nature, down to the point at which, amid the zoophytes, animal life sinks by scarcely perceptible gradations into the lines of vegetable existence. Alone among the creatures man occupies this frontier post in nature; having a body on the one hand, and being on the other a conscious spirit. And from the point of view of his higher, that is, his spiritual existence, his body seems to him a body of humiliation. It falls under all kinds of limitations and disabilities from which pure spirit is exempt. It can move, but only under the conditions of any other animal, and less swiftly and freely than most. It comes into existence through physical causes, which are indeed those which obtain throughout the animal world: it is subject to diseases, and finally to death, just as are lower creatures. As the Preacher says: "That which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again."<sup>1</sup>

Such is the physical frame of man in this present life. It is a body of humiliation. And we Christians should regard it as only a degrading incumbrance, to be treated like an ill-mannered stranger who had forced himself upon us, whom we could not well get rid of, yet wished to keep in his place; if it were not that a flood of glory has been shed on it; and that it has great prospects, a splendid future, in store for it. We Christians

<sup>1</sup> Eccles. iii. 19, 20.

know that our nature as a whole has been ennobled as well as invigorated by the Son of God. Bending, in the immensity of His love, from the throne of heaven, He has taken it upon Him in its integrity, body and soul alike, and joined it by an indissoluble union to His Own Eternal Person. That Body Which was born of Mary, Which lived on this planet for thirty-three years, Which was spat upon, buffeted, scourged, crucified, Which underwent the anguish and the coldness of death, and was raised again in glory—That Body exists somewhere in space, at “the right hand of God the Father Almighty” (so our poor human language struggles to express the unimaginable truth), and thereby confers on all who are partakers of human flesh and blood a nobility of which our race can never be deprived. “Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise Himself took part in the same.”<sup>1</sup>

Certainly He has ennobled us ; and yet while life lasts how great is the interval between us and Him ! How unlike to ours is the Body of glory Which rose from the tomb on Easter morning ; in its indescribable beauty, in its freedom of movement, in its inaccessibility to decay, in its spirituality of texture ! “His glorious Body !” exclaims St. Paul. His greatest gift is yet to come. We shall die as do the creatures around us ; whether by violence or by slow decay. But He will gather up what death has left, and will transfigure it with the splendours of a new life. He will change our body of humiliation that it may be fashioned like unto the Body of His glory. Sown in corruption, it will be raised in incorruption. Sown in dishonour, it will be raised in glory. Sown in the extremity of physical weakness, it will be raised in super-human power. Sown a natural body, which is controlled on every side by physical law, it will be raised, a true body still, but belonging to the sphere of spirit.<sup>2</sup>

Most difficult indeed it is to the imagination to understand how this poor body, our companion for so many years, nay rather, part of our very selves, is to be first wrenched from us at death, and then restored to us, if we will, transfigured by the glory of the Son of God. Little indeed can we understand that inaccessibility to disease, that radiant beauty, that superiority to distance and material obstructions when moving through space, that spirituality, in short, which awaits but which will not destroy it.

<sup>1</sup> Heb. ii. 14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 42-44.

“Heavy and dull this frame of limbs and heart,  
 Whether slow creeping on cold earth, or borne  
 On lofty steed, or loftier prow, we dart  
 O’er wave or field : yet breezes laugh to scorn

Our puny speed, and birds, and clouds in heaven,  
 And fish, like living shafts that pierce the main,  
 And stars that shoot through freezing air at even—  
 Who would but follow, might he break his chain?”

Such is nature’s whisper : but faith replies :—

“And thou shalt break it soon. The grovelling worm  
 Shall find his wings, and soar as fast and free  
 As his transfigured Lord—with lightning form  
 And snowy vest ; such grace He won for thee,

When from the grave He sprang at dawn of morn,  
 And led through boundless air thy conquering road,  
 Leaving a glorious track, where saints new-born  
 Might fearless follow to their blest abode.”<sup>1</sup>

## II.

And thus we are anticipating this question : What is the ground of the great Christian expectation of a glorified body in a future life ? How shall we get it ?

To this the Apostle would answer, “According to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.” Everything of course depends on that. St. Paul had no doubt that Jesus Christ, crucified some thirty years before, was living and reigning while he himself was writing to the Philippians. St Paul knew that Jesus Christ had actual jurisdiction over all things on earth and in heaven. As God, He always had such power ; it belonged to His Eternal oneness with the Father. It had been conferred on Him as Man. “All power is given Me in heaven and in earth.”<sup>2</sup>

With those who do not take our Lord Jesus Christ at His word, St. Paul’s words about Him would of course have no weight. If He is not God, if He does not wield Divine powers through His exalted Manhood, it is idle to discuss the probabilities of a future which depends altogether upon His practical omnipotence. But if He is God,—and His words about Himself are morally worthless, or worse than worthless, on any other supposition,—if His acts and character sufficiently warrant His words ; then this phrase, “the working of His

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Year* · Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 18.

power," covers all the ground. We are in the presence of Omnipotence.

It seems to you, you say, very strange that the various elements of a human frame resolved into dust many centuries ago should be re-collected, re-animated, endowed with a new and more glorious life. What has become of the particles? They have been absorbed, and re-absorbed into other bodies. They have passed through animals and vegetables. They have been incorporated with distinct substances, and detached again. By this time they are scattered in a thousand directions; they are whirling round and round in the never-ceasing fated cycle of destruction and reconstruction, of growth and decay, which makes up the vast life of the universe.

How are the ingredients which have belonged to a single body to be rescued from this subsequent and oft-repeated appropriation; how are they to be re-collected, re-arranged, re-incorporated, ere the promised reconstruction and transfiguration can be achieved? It is a bundle of impossibilities, you say; it is a miracle which costs too much.

Certainly it is an astonishing exertion of superhuman Power which is under consideration. But surely it is not more than any reasonable believer in God would assent to upon sufficient evidence of His declared Will. No man can believe in God, without believing in an act of power, compared with which the resurrection of the dead is a trivial incident. To believe in God is to believe in the original creation of all things out of nothing. To admit that matter, that any single particle of matter, is eternal, is to deny the solitary Eternity of God; it is, in other words, to part with an essential condition of belief in God. Certainly, if matter is eternal, we are still face to face with a mystery at least as formidable as the first Article of the Christian Creed. But then there is nothing to relieve its darkness.

If a reasonable man believes in God, he cannot escape belief in creation out of nothing: and who that has ever tried to think out what these words mean would object to anything that God has promised, on the score of its being miraculous? Creation is, after all, the great miracle. It is the miracle of miracles; and the man who believes it will not question God's Word merely because the results to which it is pledged are what we call miraculous. By the very act of believing in God he believes in an initial miracle, compared with which all that can possibly follow is insignificant.

## III.

Such a faith as this in the Resurrection, when it is sincerely entertained, ought to have practical consequences. If, at death, we parted company with the body for good and all, if the soul was the only part of our being which had a future in store for it, then it would not matter what was done, either in life or in death, with the perishing husk. But if this body of humiliation is the heir to a splendid destiny, we shall treat it, both in life and in death, as princes are treated who live in expectation of a throne; we shall treat it with all the care and honour which its prospects demand.

a. Hence, first, respect for the human body after death<sup>1</sup> is a natural result of Christian belief that the inanimate form lying before us is not utterly gone for ever; that it certainly has a future. We may not say that respect for the dead has no place in Heathendom. There are vague instincts, corresponding to guesses, which man in a natural state makes about his destiny; there are vague apprehensions of ghostly powers who might do an ill turn to the irreverent; there are superstitions which prompt respect for the dead. But Christianity has made this feeling a rule; has given it reason and permanence by the great glowing faith in the Resurrection. Just as the Body of the Lord Jesus, after His human soul had parted from It, and had descended into the region of the imprisoned dead,<sup>2</sup> was carefully wrapped in linen and laid in a tomb until the morn of Easter,<sup>3</sup> so ever since have the bodies of departed Christians been looked upon with some portion of the faith and love of Nicodemus and Joseph; for they too, we know, will rise. We are not handling a lump of decaying matter, which has lost its interest for ever, and which will presently be resolved into its chemical constituents, to be recombined no more. It lies before us, indeed, a body of humiliation, but one day it is to be fashioned like the glorious Body of the ascended Son of God. And we feel and act towards it accordingly.

Many who hear me will be aware that of late, in this and other countries, a controversy has been going on upon the question whether it would not be better to burn our dead than

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 2; St. Aug. *De Civ. Dei*, xii. 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1 St. Pet. iii. 18, 19.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 59, 60.



to bury them in the soil. Here in England an accomplished physicist has urged with great ability the arguments which may be produced for cremation. He insists that the practice of burying, even in large suburban cemeteries, is, and is likely to become, increasingly dangerous to the public health. He refers to the evidence which was collected in the course of the inquiries which preceded the prohibition of intramural burial. He maintains that the old dangers will repeat themselves as the population spreads around and beyond our modern burying-places in the suburbs of the Metropolis.

If it could be shown that the dead could not be buried anywhere in the soil, without involving harm or danger to the living, we should, undoubtedly, be right in entertaining this proposal. The bodies of the dead would rise just as easily and certainly out of the ashes that had been placed in an urn, as out of the decomposed contents of any vault in this Cathedral, or of any grave in a country churchyard. The mighty power of Christ would not work less effectively in the one case than in the other. But, on the other hand, ought anything short of a proved necessity, such as motives of convenience or economy, to warrant a serious departure from the immemorial practice of Christendom? Cremation does not represent a new and unthought-of improvement upon the custom of the world. Remember that when Christianity appeared upon the scene the pagan world very generally burned its dead. The Church deliberately substituted burial for cremation; and we may not lightly distrust the instinct of our first fathers in the faith. Jesus Christ was buried, not burned. We cannot think of the burning of His Sacred Body without a shudder. And as He is, so are we in this world.<sup>1</sup> Surely to a believer in the Resurrection it is more welcome to leave our dead in the soil, as in the hands of God, than to hasten, or anticipate, by the violent operation of a furnace, His wonted treatment of the body for which He has so great a future in reserve.

β. But secondly, much more important is our duty towards the body during this present life. That duty may be explained in two words: guard it and train it. You who are well off, do what you can for the bodies of the poor. They too will rise. And keep your own "in temperance, soberness, and chastity." Keep it from all that would bar its entrance to the presence

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. John iv. 17.



of Christ. Keep it from those mischiefs which have their seat in it; since, as St. Peter says, they war, not merely against the physical constitution, but against the soul,<sup>1</sup> with which the body is so closely linked. Every one that hath the Resurrection hope in him "purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure."<sup>2</sup> Do not forget how the sinful body may, even here, be made clean by Christ's Body, as the soul may be washed with His most precious Blood;<sup>3</sup> do not neglect that glorious Sacrament which, if worthily received, "preserves body and soul unto everlasting life."<sup>4</sup> And train the body too. Train it, not merely as a Greek athlete, or as a beautiful animal, in the hope of an earthly prize;<sup>5</sup> but train it as a destined partaker in those scenes of transcendent joy and worship, which are described in the Apocalypse.<sup>6</sup> "Present your bodies," says the Apostle, "a living sacrifice;"<sup>7</sup> in work, and in that best of work, in worship. Worship, bodily reverence as well as spiritual communion, is a preparation for heaven. The body which is never reverent, which never bends in adoration before the Being of beings, is not likely to be joined to a soul that has learned to hold real communion with the Infinite. In such matters Christian instinct is better than argument; and when Eternity is once treated as a practical reality, we are not far from agreeing as to how to bear ourselves among the things of time.

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> 1 St. John iii. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Communion Service: Prayer of Humble Access.

<sup>4</sup> Communion Service: Words of Administration.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 25.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. v. 13, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. xii. 1.

## SERMON XXIV.

### THE LORD'S DAY.

REV. 1. 10.

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.*

WHAT is the meaning of this expression,—“the Lord's Day”?

Does it mean “the Day of Judgment,” and is St. John saying that in an ecstasy he beheld the last judgment of God? Undoubtedly “the day of the Lord” is an expression often applied to the Day of Judgment both in the Old and New Testaments. But such a meaning would not serve St. John's purpose here. He is thinking of the date of his great vision, not yet of the scene to which it introduced him. And just as he says it was in the isle of Patmos, thus marking the place, so he says that it was on the Lord's Day, thus marking the time. Whatever the Lord's Day may mean, it cannot mean the Day of Judgment.

Does it then stand for the annual feast of our Lord's Resurrection from the dead; as we should now say, Easter Day? That day, as we know from the Epistle to the Corinthians, was observed in Apostolic times.<sup>1</sup> It was the feast which the Corinthians were to keep, “not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”<sup>2</sup> But it could hardly have served for a date, because, in the Apostolic age, as for some time after, there were two different opinions in the Church as to the day on which Easter ought properly to be observed. If the Lord's Day, in this passage, had meant Easter Day, it would not have settled the date of the Revelation without some further notice of the exact time of year.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 8.

Does the phrase then mean the Sabbath-day of the Mosaic law? God calls the Sabbath, by the mouth of Isaiah, "My holy day,"<sup>1</sup> and the language of the fourth commandment, "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God,"<sup>2</sup> might well justify the expression. But there is no instance in the New Testament of an allusion to the Sabbath, except by its own name, the Sabbath. If St. John had meant the Sabbath, or seventh day of the week, he would certainly have used the word Sabbath. He would not have used another word which, in the days of the Apostles, and ever since, the Christian Church has applied, not to the seventh day of the week, but to the first.

There is indeed no real reason for doubting that by the Lord's Day St. John meant the first day of the week, or, as we should say, Sunday. Our Lord Jesus Christ made that day in a special sense His Own, by rising from the dead on it, and by connecting it with His first six appearances after His Resurrection. On the first Lord's Day, He appeared five times. After the lapse of a week, on the next Lord's Day, He appeared to the Eleven, having during the interval, so far as we know, remained out of sight. The Day of Pentecost, on which the Holy Ghost came down from heaven, and created the Church of Christ, also fell on a Lord's Day; seven weeks after the Day of the Resurrection. And from this time we find scattered hints of its observance, as when St. Paul spent a week at Troas, in the course of his third missionary journey. "Upon the first day of the week," we are told, "the disciples came together to break bread,"<sup>3</sup> that is, to partake of the Holy Communion; "and Paul preached unto them." So when St. Paul is giving directions to the Corinthians for a collection of money on behalf of the poor members of the Church in Palestine, he writes, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."<sup>4</sup> This passage shows that the first day in the week was then recognised as a natural day for especial religious efforts; and it is here connected with what we should call a weekly offertory. St. Paul tells the Corinthians that he had already given a similar order to the Galatian Churches.<sup>5</sup>

When, then, some years afterwards, we find St. John an exile at Patmos, saying that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, we know what he means. The day was already observed

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lviii. 13.<sup>2</sup> Exod. xx. 10.<sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 7.<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 2.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 1.

by Apostolic Christians as the weekly festival of the Resurrection. No doubt, on that very day, St. John had held communion with his Lord and Master in the Sacrament of His love. Nay, it is possible, as has been conjectured, that it was during that awful service that he was in the Spirit, in a state of inspired trance or ecstasy; so that as the veil of sense dropped away, he saw "the invisible things," and "the things that shall be hereafter,"<sup>1</sup> under such forms as were needed for the purpose of translation into the thought and language of man. It is the last mention of the day in the New Testament. And, after Pentecost, it is the greatest.

The Lord's Day, then, of the Christian Church is the weekly commemoration of the great event which is annually celebrated at Easter. And, therefore, Easter is a fitting time for considering the character of the day, and the uses to which it should be put by Christians.

What are the principles which are recognised in the observance of the Lord's Day by the Church of Christ?

## I.

The first principle embodied in the Lord's Day is the duty of consecrating a certain proportion of time, at least one-seventh, to the especial service of God.

This principle is common to the Jewish Sabbath, and to the Christian's Lord's Day. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day"<sup>2</sup> means for us Christians, "Remember that thou keep holy one day in seven." Keep the day holy; consecrate it. So the precept runs. It is the same word in the original as that which is used when the consecration of the priests,<sup>3</sup> of the altar,<sup>4</sup> of the first-born,<sup>5</sup> of the people of Israel,<sup>6</sup> of the finished Temple,<sup>7</sup> are severally prescribed. Such consecration implies two things; a separation of the thing or person consecrated from all others, and the communication to him, or it, of a quality of holiness or purity. The first idea predominates in the remarkable order to sanctify Mount Sinai by hedging it round and making it inaccessible.<sup>8</sup> The second predominates in the other cases referred to. The two ideas meet in the case of the Sabbath, or of the Lord's Day. The day is to be unlike

<sup>1</sup> Rev i 19    <sup>2</sup> Exod. xx. 8.    <sup>3</sup> Ibid. xxviii. 41; xxix. 1; xl. 13-15

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xxix. 36; xl. 10.    <sup>5</sup> Ibid. xiii. 2.    <sup>6</sup> Ibid. xix. 10, 14.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Kings viii. 64.    <sup>8</sup> Exod. xix. 12, 13.

other days, and it is also to be marked by positive characteristics which shall proclaim its dedication to God.

To this idea of the especial consecration of a section of time, it is objected that in a true Christian life all time is consecrated. Life, as a whole, is owed to the Creator ; the whole of time is not less His due than the whole service of mind, and soul, and strength. How, it is asked, can there be any deliberately unconsecrated time in the life of a true disciple of Him "Who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with Him ;"<sup>1</sup> Who "died for all, that they which live should not any longer live unto themselves, but unto Him Which died for them, and rose again"?<sup>2</sup> Does not this consecration of a section of time ignore the existing obligation to a service which knows no limits but the limits of strength and life?

The answer is that the larger obligation of love is not ignored because the smaller one of duty is insisted on. Human life being what it is, it is easy to do nothing by undertaking to do everything. Certainly the whole life of a Christian should be a consecrated life : God is not to be forgotten in the week because He is especially remembered on Sunday. But a duty which is always obligatory is likely to be recognised when certain definite times for recognising it are insisted on. All a Christian's time is properly consecrated time ; but practically, in many cases, none would be consecrated unless an effort were made to mark a certain proportion of it by a special consecration. The case is parallel to that of prayer. Our Lord says that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.<sup>3</sup> The Apostle says, "Pray without ceasing."<sup>4</sup> And the life of a good Christian is, no doubt, a continuous prayer ; the spirit of prayer penetrates and hallows it ; each duty is intertwined with acts of the soul which raise it above this earthly scene to the throne and Presence of Christ. But, for all that, in all Christian lives stated times of prayer, private as well as public, are practically necessary, if the practice of prayer is to be consistently maintained. Yet morning and evening and mid-day or other devotions are perfectly consistent with recognition of the Apostolic and Divine sayings, that prayer should be incessant in a Christian life. And in like manner the especial consecration of one day in seven does not involve an implied rejection of the rights of Jesus Christ over all Christian time.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. v. 10.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke xviii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 15.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. v. 17.

It is like those small payments known to the law, which do not profess to give an equivalent for that which they represent, but only technically to acknowledge a much larger claim ; it implies that all our time belongs to God, although, considering our weakness, He graciously accepts a prescribed instalment or section of it.

And, apart from its importance in the life of the servants of God, the public setting apart of a certain measure of time to God's service is a witness to His claims borne before the world, and calculated to strike the imaginations of men. Such an observance makes room for the thought of God amid the pressing importunities of business and enjoyment. Like a great cathedral, it is a public attestation of what is due to God ; addressed to the senses, and making itself felt in the common habits of men. From this point of view, our English Sunday, whatever may be said about mistakes in the detail of its observance, is a national blessing. It brings the existence and claims of God before the minds even of those who do not make a good use of it. And religious foreigners have not seldom told us that it fills them with envy and admiration ; and that we shall do well to guard that which, once lost, is certain to be wellnigh, if not altogether, irrecoverable.

## II.

A second principle represented in the Lord's Day is the periodical suspension of human toil. This is closely connected with that of the consecration of time. In order to make the day, by this prohibition, unlike other days ; in order to make room for the acknowledgment of God on it ; ordinary occupations are suspended. Here again we have a second principle common to the Jewish Sabbath and to the Christian Lord's Day. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do."<sup>1</sup> But of the seventh day it is said, "In it thou shalt do no manner of work ; thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and the foreigners who live with thee."<sup>2</sup> In the Old Testament a variety of particular occupations are explicitly forbidden on the Sabbath ; sowing and reaping,<sup>3</sup> gathering wood and kindling a fire for cooking,<sup>4</sup> holding markets,<sup>5</sup> every kind of trade, press-

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xx. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Neh. xiii. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Num. xv. 32-36 ; Ex. xxxv. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Neh. x. 31 ; xiii. 16-18.



ing grapes,<sup>1</sup> carrying any sort of burden.<sup>2</sup> In a later age the Pharisees added largely to these prohibitions. They held it unlawful to pluck an ear of corn in passing through a corn-field,<sup>3</sup> or to assist and relieve the sick;<sup>4</sup> although they ruled that an animal which had fallen into a ditch might be legally helped to get out,<sup>5</sup> and that guests might be invited to an entertainment,<sup>6</sup> and that a child of eight days old might be circumcised.<sup>7</sup> There were thirty-nine Rabbinical prohibitions on the Sabbath, of which one limited a Sabbath-day's journey to two thousand cubits, and another forbade killing even the most dangerous vermin, while a third proscribed the use of a wooden leg, or a crutch, or a purse. These, and other prohibitions, illustrate the tendency of mere law to become, sooner or later, through excessive technicality, the caricature and the ruin of moral principle. And it was against these Pharisaic perversions of the Sabbath that our Lord protested by act and word; reminding His countrymen that the Sabbath was made for the moral good of man, and not man for the later legal theory of the Sabbath.<sup>8</sup> But the broad principle of abstinence from labour, however misrepresented in the later Jewish practice, was itself sacred; and it passed into the Christian observance of the Lord's Day. We see this plainly in notices of the observance in the early times of the Christian Church. They show that the general rule of the fourth commandment with regard to work, modified by our Lord's teaching respecting duties of charity and necessity, was held to apply to the Christian Lord's Day. Thus Tertullian, writing at the end of the second century, calls the day both Sunday and the Lord's Day; says that it is a day of joy and that to fast on it is wrong; yet adds that "business is put of on it, lest we give place to the devil."<sup>9</sup> And thus when, under Constantine, the imperial government had acknowledged the faith of Christ, and Christianity made itself felt in the principles of legislation, provision was very soon made for the observance of the Lord's Day. Even four years before the Council of Nicæa, Constantine issued an edict ordering the judges, the town populations, the artists and tradesmen of all kinds, to cease from labour on the Lord's Day. He allows agricultural labour to go on, if the safety of crops or the health of cattle depends on it. And

<sup>1</sup> Neh. xiii. 15-20.<sup>2</sup> Jer. xvii. 21, 22.<sup>3</sup> St. Mark ii. 23, 24.<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xii. 10; St. John ix. 14-16.<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. xii. 11.<sup>6</sup> St. Luke xiv. 1.<sup>7</sup> St. John vii. 22, 23.<sup>8</sup> St. Mark ii. 27.<sup>9</sup> *Tert. de Orat. c. 23.*

when we examine the Codes of the Emperors Theodosius and Justinian, in which the experience and traditions of the great Roman lawyers are combined with, and modified by, the softening influences of Christianity, we find that the observance of the Lord's Day is carefully provided for. Works of necessity, whether civil or agricultural, are allowed; others are forbidden. Public spectacles of all kinds and the games of the circus are suppressed.<sup>1</sup> And the great teachers of the Church in the fourth and fifth centuries did what they could to second the imperial legislation by exhorting the faithful to abstain from works or sights which profaned the Holy Day of the Christian week.

This insistence on a day of freedom from earthly labour is not inconsistent with a recognition of the dignity and the claims of labour. On the contrary, it protects labour, by arresting the excessive expenditure of human strength; and it raises and consecrates labour by leading the workman's mind to acknowledge the Source and Support of his exertions.

When, in the first French Revolution, there prevailed a fanatical eagerness to show how well the world could get on without Christianity, some important experiments were made on this very subject. And the general result was to prove that the abstinence from labour on one day in seven is enacted in the interests of labour itself. Especially is this the case at a time like our own, when men live and work at high pressure; when capital demands quick returns for outlay; when competition is keen, and the place of a man who faints for a moment at his post is at once occupied by a stronger rival, who stands hard by, watching his opportunity. It is sometimes asked why this abstinence from labour should be dictated to us; why each man cannot make a Sunday for himself, when his strength or health demands it. The answer is, Because, in a busy, highly-worked community, unless all are to abstain from work, none will abstain; since, in point of fact, none can afford to abstain. This is the principle of the Bank holidays: the State comes in to do for labour four times a year, on a small scale, what the Church does on a large scale every week; it essays to make a general rest from work possible by an external sanction. And this is the principle which inspires an excellent movement lately set on foot for the early closing of houses of business. Unless, in deference to the authority, whether of law or public

<sup>1</sup> Cod. Theod. l. xv. t. 5, *de Spectac.* c. 2: Cod. Just. l. iii. t. 12, *de Fer.* c. 3.

opinion, all employers of labour consent to close their business at an earlier hour, none can afford to do so. If the sanction of the Sunday rest from toil were to be withdrawn, it would, in a civilisation like ours, go hard, first with labour, and then, at no distant interval, with capital. The dignity and obligation of labour is sufficiently recognised in the precept : "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do ;" and the health and happiness and moral wellbeing of the labourer is secured by a seventh day, in which the labourer is to "do no manner of work."

### III

Thus the Sabbath and the Lord's Day agree in affirming two principles ; the hallowing a seventh part of time, and the obligation of abstinence from servile work on one day in seven. But are the days identical ? May we rightly call the Lord's Day the Sabbath ? These questions must be answered in the negative. The Lord's Day was never identified with the Jewish Sabbath before the rise of Puritanism in the seventeenth century. The Puritan Divines had a remarkable knowledge of the contents of Holy Scripture ; but, when reading it, they seem to have had no eye for its perspectives. They had broken away to a very serious extent from the old Church interpretation, which would have saved them from some of their mistakes ; and there was, in that age, no criticism sufficiently educated to replace even imperfectly the guidance which they had lost. Accordingly, in their anxiety to secure a strong Scriptural sanction for the observance of the Lord's Day, they said that the Lord's Day was in fact the Jewish Sabbath, and that all that is said in the Old Testament about the Sabbath applies to it. Thus, without suspecting it, they took up about the Sabbath exactly the position which the Judaizers in Galatia took up about circumcision. They said that a purely Jewish ordinance was a necessary element of the Christian life ; and if St. Paul could have appeared in the seventeenth century, or afterwards, to Christians who had made such a mistake as this, is it not likely that he would have repeated with modifications his old exclamation.<sup>1</sup> 'O my well-meaning but foolish English friends, who hath bewitched you, that you should revive a Jewish observance in the midst of Christendom ?'

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 1.

Observe that the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day, while agreeing in affirming two principles, differ in two noteworthy respects.

First, they differ, as has already been implied, in being kept on distinct days. The Sabbath was kept on the last day of the week : the Lord's Day is kept on the first. "The seventh day," and no other, "is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God."<sup>1</sup> When then the Christian Church keeps its weekly holy day on the first day of the week, it does much more than change the day. Had the motive of the observance remained the same, this change in a Divine law would have been unpardonable. The change was made because there was an imperative reason for making it.

For the Lord's Day and the Sabbath Day differ, secondly, in the reason or motive for observing them. The Sabbath is the weekly commemoration of the rest of God after creation. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day : wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it."<sup>2</sup> Israel was the people to whom God had revealed the mystery of creation ; that master-truth by which human thought is saved now as of old from the sin and folly of confounding God with His works. The Sabbath was the weekly commemoration of the finished work of God. It brought before the mind of the Jew the ineffable majesty of the Great Creator, between Whom and the noblest work of His hands there yawns an impassable abyss. Thus the Sabbath observance, apart from its directly sanctifying effect upon individual life, was the great protection to the Jews against the idolatry with which they came in contact in Egypt, in Phœnicia, in Babylon, and against the Greek modes of thought which tried them so sorely at Alexandria and in Palestine under the Macedonian kings of a later time.

The Christian motive for observing the Lord's Day is the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. That truth is to the Christian Creed what the creation of the world out of nothing is to the Jewish. The Lord's Day marks the completed Redemption, as the Sabbath had marked the completed Creation. The Resurrection is also the fundamental truth on which Christianity rests ; and thus it is as much insisted on by the Christian Apostles as is God's creation of all things by the Jewish prophets. Not, of course, that the creation of all

<sup>1</sup> Exod. xx. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 8, 11.

things by God is less precious to the Christian than to the Jew : but it is more taken for granted. In Christian eyes, the creation of the world of nature is eclipsed by the creation of the world of grace ; and of this last creation, the Resurrection is the warrant. The Resurrection is commemorated, as St. Irenæus points out, on the first day of the week, when God brought light and order out of darkness and chaos.<sup>1</sup> It is the risen and enthroned Lamb Who says, "Behold, I make all things new :"<sup>2</sup> and therefore if "any man be in Christ, he is the new creation ; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new."<sup>3</sup> Of this new creation, the Lord's Day is the weekly festival, as being the festival of the Resurrection.

In a remarkable passage of the Epistle to the Colossians, St. Paul connects the keeping of the Jewish Sabbath by Christians with that of the new moon. "Let no man judge you . . . in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days."<sup>4</sup> In St. Paul's eyes the Jewish Sabbath was just as much part of the discarded system of the ceremonial law, as was the observance of the new moon. The Christian Lord's Day stands on different ground. It is sometimes, indeed, loosely called the Christian Sabbath ; but the epithet Christian implies that it is no longer the Sabbath in the Jewish sense any more than "the Israel of God," about which St. Paul writes to the Galatians,<sup>5</sup> is the same thing as the Israel of David or of Ezra. The Jewish Sabbath stands in the same relation to the Lord's Day as does Circumcision to Christian Baptism ; as does the Paschal Lamb to the Holy Communion ; as does the Law to the Gospel. It is a shadow of a good thing to come.<sup>6</sup> It is only perpetuated by being transfigured, or rather it is so transfigured as to have parted with its identity. The special consecration of a seventh part of time, the abstinence from labour, remains. But the spirit and governing motive of the day is changed. Christians stand no longer at the foot of Sinai, but by the empty tomb in the garden outside Jerusalem. And here a third and last principle, which is embodied by the day, comes into view.

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 3. 4.<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 5.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>4</sup> Col. ii. 16.<sup>5</sup> Gal. vi. 16.<sup>6</sup> Heb. x. 1



## III.

This third principle is the public worship of God. The cessation of ordinary work is not enjoined upon Christians only that they may while away the time, or spend it in aimless self-pleasing, or in something worse. The Lord's Day is the day upon which our Lord Jesus Christ has a first claim. On this great day every instructed Christian thinks of Him as completing the work of our Redemption; as vindicating His character as a Teacher of absolute truth; as triumphing over His enemies; as conquering death in that nature which had hitherto always been subject to its empire; as designing, now that He has overcome the sharpness of death, to open the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

“Morn of morns, and day of days.”

It is unlike any other in the week; and the sense of this finds its natural expression in prayer and praise.

The Sabbath, too, had its special religious observances. There was a “Holy Convocation” on it; a meeting together of the people for a religious purpose. The usual morning and evening sacrifices were doubled. The shew-bread, one of the types of the Blessed Sacrament, was changed. In the days after David, a new course of priests and Levites commenced its ministrations. And when Jews lived far from the Temple, they met together in the synagogues, to hear the Law and the Prophets read to them, and to listen to exhortations which were based on these sacred words.

In the Church of Christ the first duty of a Christian is, like the Holy Women and the Disciples, to seek to hold converse with our Risen Lord. A well-spent Lord's Day should always begin with that supreme act of Christian worship, in which we meet Jesus verily and indeed; the only public service known to the early and Apostolic Church; the Most Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of our Redeemer.

What the practice of our fathers in the faith was within a few years after the Apostles had gone to their rest, we learn from the celebrated letter of the cultivated heathen governor, Pliny, to his imperial master, Trajan: “The Christians,” he says, “are accustomed to meet together on a stated day, before it is light, and to sing hymns to Christ as God, and to bind themselves by a Sacrament, not for any wicked purpose; but



never to commit fraud, theft, or adultery, never to break their word, nor to refuse, when called upon, to deliver up any trust.”<sup>1</sup> This was his impression as a heathen, looking at the Sacred Service from without, and gathering its nature from Christian language about it which he imperfectly understood. How Sunday was kept by Christians about the year Anno Domini 140 is very fully described by an eminent convert from paganism, Justin Martyr. He says that on that day there was an assembly of all Christians who lived either in town or country ; that the writings of the Apostles and Prophets were read ; and that prayer was offered, and alms were collected, and the Holy Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood was celebrated.<sup>2</sup> As we descend the stream of time, illustrations become more numerous. But in the early Church of Christ it was taken for granted that a Christian would observe the Lord's Day, first of all, by taking part in that solemn Sacrament and Service which the Lord had Himself ordained. A Christian of the first or second century would not have understood a Sunday in which, whatever else might be done, the Holy Communion was omitted ; and this great duty is best complied with as early in the day as possible. When the natural powers of the mind have been lately refreshed by sleep, when as yet the world has not taken off the bloom of the soul's first self-dedication to God, when thought, and feeling, and purpose, are still bright and fresh and unembarrassed ; then is the time, for those who would reap the full harvest of grace, to approach the Altar. It is quite a different thing in the middle of the day ; even when serious efforts are made to communicate reverently. Those who begin their Sundays with the Holy Communion know one of the deepest meanings of that promise, “They that seek Me early shall find Me.”<sup>3</sup>

Not that it is wise or reverent to suppose that all the religious duties of a Sunday can be properly discharged before breakfast, and that the rest of the day may be spent as we like. No Christian whose heart is in the right place will think this. Later opportunities of public prayer and of instruction in the faith and duty of a Christian will be made the most of, as may be possible for each. Especially should an effort be made on every Sunday in the year to learn some portion of the Will of God more perfectly than before ; some truth or aspect of His Revelation of Himself in the Gospel ; some Christian duty, as taught by the example or the Words

<sup>1</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 97.<sup>2</sup> S. Justin. *Apol.* 1.<sup>3</sup> Prov. viii. 17.

of Christ. Without a positive effort of this kind a Sunday is a lost Sunday : we shall think of it thus in eternity. Where there is the will to seek truth and wisdom there is no difficulty about the way : books, friends, sermons, are at hand. We have but to be in earnest, and all will follow.

When the religious obligations of Sunday have been complied with, there are duties of human brotherhood which may well find a place in it : kind deeds and words to friends, visits to the sick, acts of consideration for the poor, are in keeping with the spirit of the day. Above all, it should be made a bright as well as a solemn day for children ; first solemn but then and always bright, so that in their after-life they may look back on the Sundays of childhood as its happiest days. And in itself there would be no harm if, for those who live in towns, museums and picture-galleries could be open on Sundays, just as the fields and the gardens are open to those who live in the country ; for art, like nature, is to each one of us what we bring to it. The danger of such proposals is that, to realise them, Sunday labour must be employed, in some cases on a very considerable scale ; and this would too easily lead the way to its employment for other and general purposes, and so to the abandonment of an essential characteristic of the Lord's Day.

Among the thoughts which Sundays, more than other days, bring back to us, is the memory of those whom we have known and loved, and who have passed away. We do well to make the most of these thoughts : they are sent us from above to enable us to prepare to follow. Some perhaps who hear me are thinking to-day of those brave men whose bones were laid two days ago in the vaults of this Cathedral.<sup>1</sup> They died in the service of their country : the accomplished engineer, the gallant sailor, the Arabic scholar, whose acquirements were of such an order that probably not more than half a dozen men in Europe could even do them justice. They died at the call of duty. And their example is treasured in the memory of a grateful country. We buried them on Friday, looking, as Christians should, to His Cross Who redeemed them ; and now Sunday sheds upon their new-made graves the light and comfort of the Resurrection.

But, as I have said, the atmosphere which a true Christian

<sup>1</sup> Professor Edward Henry Palmer, Captain Gill, and Lieutenant Charrington. Cf. Besant's *Life and Achievements of E. H. Palmer*, pp. 328, 329.

breathes, on Sunday especially, is above all an atmosphere of worship. He may think it right and reverent to say little. But the day says to him from its early dawn, "Lift up thy heart," and his answer is, "I lift it up unto the Lord."<sup>1</sup> He knows that he has indeed "come unto Mount Zion, and to the city of the Living God, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly of the Church of the First-born whose names are written in heaven, and to Jesus."<sup>2</sup> The invisible world, with all its beauty and all its awe, is around him, and he is able to keep earthly preoccupations at bay, and to surrender himself to the influences which stream down upon him from the throne of the Redeemer. He is, in his way, like St. John, in the Spirit, and sees the higher and everlasting realities, and measures earth against heaven, and time against eternity, and man, so poor and weak, when at his best and strongest, against the Almighty and Everlasting.

Sundays such as these are to many of us like shafts in a long tunnel; they admit at regular intervals light and air. And, though we pass them all too soon, their helpful influence does not vanish with the passing. It furnishes us with strength and light for the duties which await us, and makes it easier to follow loyally the road towards our eternal home which God's loving providence may have traced for each of us. Let us endeavour, while we may, to make the most of these hours of grace and mercy, and to lead others to do so; in the solemn conviction that as each such day passes one more decisive step has been taken, of whatever kind, in the direction of a destiny, which, once fixed by death, is fixed irrevocably.

<sup>1</sup> Communion Service.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xii. 23, 24.

## SERMON XXV.

### THE LORD OF LIFE.

ST. JOHN XIV. 19.

*Because I live, ye shall live also.*

THIS saying of our Lord's in the supper-room, like so much else which He uttered there, is only to be fully understood in the light of His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. When He said, "Because I live," He had death immediately before Him. He was taking the measure of death; death was to be no real interruption of His ever-continuing Life. Death, with all its physical and mental miseries, was only an incident in His Existence. Already He sees the Resurrection beyond, and He exclaims, "I live." It was not possible, as St. Peter says, that He, the Prince of Life, should be holden of death;<sup>1</sup> and He treats death as an already vanquished enemy, which cannot have any lasting effect upon His indestructible Life.

And further, this Life of His, thus inaccessible to permanent injury, enduring beyond the Cross and grave, is the cause of ours. "Because I live, ye shall live also." He describes what is impending: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more." He would be hidden away in the tomb. "But ye see Me."<sup>2</sup> His disciples would see Him; first with their bodily eyes, during the forty days after His Resurrection, and next with the eyes of faith, throughout all the ages, until He comes to judgment. And thus "Because I live, ye shall live also." Assured of the enduring continuity of His Life, the disciples might be certain of their own. Because He lives after His Resurrection, after His Ascension, in the Life of Glory, therefore His disciples, in some sense, will live also.

<sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 24.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xiv. 19.

## I.

Here let us observe, first of all, what our Lord's Words do not mean.

They do not mean that the immortality of the soul of man is dependent upon the Redemptive Work, or upon the Glorified Life of Christ. Man is an immortal being, just as he is a thinking and feeling being, by the original terms of his nature. God has made him immortal, whether for weal or woe. Whether a man is redeemed or not, whether he is sanctified or not, he will exist for ever. God might have given him a soul subject to annihilation. But God has given him a soul which is indestructible. And this quality of the soul of man is just as much a part of man's nature as are the limbs of his body or the faculties of his mind.

Of late we have heard something of a phrase new to Christian ears, "conditional immortality." We are told that man is not immortal by the terms of his nature, that he may become immortal if he is saved by Christ. Unredeemed man, the man who dies in a state of nature, so we are told, becomes extinct, if not at death, yet very shortly afterwards, when anything that may survive death will fade away into nothingness. This, it is said, is more in keeping with what we see around us than the old Christian doctrine that every human being must necessarily exist, in whatever condition, for ever. Everything around us changes, decays, passes away, and this dissolution of all the organised forms of matter seems, it is suggested, to forewarn man of his own approaching and complete destruction; unless, indeed, some Great and Superhuman Power should take him by the hand, and confer on him the gift of immortality which, in virtue of his own nature, he does not possess. Some of the persons who talk and think thus forget that the New Testament treats man as a being who will live after death whether in happiness or in misery. And others forget that, before our Lord came, the best and most thoughtful men in the heathen world were satisfied of this truth; as indeed any of us may be who will consider how generally unlike the spirit or soul of man is to any merely material creature. Let us dwell for a while on some considerations which go to establish this unlikeness between spiritual and material beings.

1. The first is that the spirit or soul of man knows itself to

be capable, I do not say of unlimited, but certainly of continuous, development. However vigorous a tree or an animal may be, it soon reaches a point at which it can grow no longer. The tree has borne all the leaves, buds, flowers, fruits, that it can. Its vital force is exhausted; it can do no more. The animal has attained, we will suppose, to the finest proportions of which its species is capable; it has done its best in the way of strength and beauty, and the limit has been reached; it can do no more. With the soul of man, whether as a thinking or feeling power, it is otherwise. Of this, we can never say that it has certainly exhausted itself. When a man of science has made a great discovery, or a man of letters has written a great book, or a statesman has carried a great measure or series of measures, we cannot say—"He has done his all; he is exhausted." Undoubtedly in man the spirit is largely dependent on the material body which encases it: "the corruptible body," so says ancient Hebrew wisdom, "presseth down the soul."<sup>1</sup> As the body moves towards decay and dissolution, it inflicts something of its weakness and incapacity upon its spiritual companion, the soul. But the soul constantly resists and protests against this, asserting its own separate and vigorous existence. The mind knows that each new effort, instead of exhausting its powers, really enlarges them, and that, if only the physical conditions necessary to continued exertion in the present state of things are not withdrawn, it will go on continuously making larger and nobler acquisitions. So too with the heart, the conscience, the sense of duty. In these too there is no such thing as finality. One noble art suggests another: one great sacrifice for truth or duty prompts another. The virtuous impulse in the soul is not, like the life-power of a tree or an animal, a self-exhausting force. On the contrary, it is always, even more consistently than thought, moving forward, conceiving of and aiming at higher duties, and understanding more clearly that, advance as it may, it will not reach the limits of its activity. "Be not weary in well-doing"<sup>2</sup> is the language of the Eternal Wisdom to the human will. But never has it been said to the body of man or animal, or to tree or flower, "Be not weary of growing or thriving." For organised matter, in its noblest forms, differs from spirit in this, that it does reach the limits of its activity; and then it enters on the path of decay and dissolution.

<sup>1</sup> Wisdom ix. 15.<sup>2</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 13.



2. A second consideration is this. The spirit or mind of man is conscious of and values its own existence. This is not the case with any material living forms, however lofty or beautiful. The most magnificent tree only gives enjoyment to other beings ; it never understands that it itself exists ; it is not conscious of losing anything when it is cut down. Poets may fondly treat it as an object of their pity or sympathy ; but it has no interest in its own perfection. An animal does indeed feel pleasure and pain. But it feels each sensation as each sensation comes ; it never puts them together : it never takes the measure of its own life, and looks on it, as if from outside, and as a whole. The animal lives wholly in the present. It has no memory. Now and then some object, which it has met before, rouses in it a sense of association with some past pleasure or pain : but that is all. Practically the animal has no past. Nor does it look forward. The future is a blank to it : it forecasts nothing. It does not expect the pains or the pleasures of its coming existence ; it has no anticipations even of death, except such as its senses may immediately convey to it. How different is it with the conscious, self-measuring spirit of man ! Man's spirit lives more in the past and in the future than in the present, exactly in the degree in which it makes the most of itself. Man, as a spirit, reaches back into the past ; reviews it ; lives it over again in memory ; turns it to account in the way of experience. Man, as a spirit, reaches onward into future time ; gazes wistfully at its uncertainties ; maps it out ; provides for it ; and, at least conditionally, disposes of it. Man, as a spirit, rises out of and above the successive sensations which make up to an animal its whole present life ; he understands what it is to exist ; he understands his relation to other beings and to nature ; he sees something of the unique grandeur of his being among the existences around him. And then withal he desires to continue his existence beyond the present, into the future which he anticipates ; into a very distant future, if he may. The more his spirit makes of itself, of its powers and resources, the more earnestly does it desire prolonged existence. Thus the best of the heathens have enjoyed a clear presentiment of a life beyond the grave. These men, of high thoughts and noble resolves, could not understand, that because material bodies were perishing around them, therefore conscience, reason, will, the common endowments of humankind, must or could be extinguished too. These men longed to exist, ay, after death,

that they might continue to make progress in all such good as they had begun in this life ; in high thoughts and in excellent resolves. And with these longings they believed that they would then exist, after all in this life was over. The longing was itself a sort of proof that its object was real ; for how was the existence of the longing to be explained, if all enterprise in thought and in virtue was to be abruptly broken off by the shock of death ? At any rate, in this longing, and in the power of self-measurement out of which it grew, the spirit of man discovered its radical unlikeness to the lower forms of life around it. It became familiar with the idea of a perpetuated existence, under other conditions, beyond the grave.

3. A third consideration, of much weight, which pointed towards the natural immortality of man, was this. Unless a spiritual being is immortal, such a being does, in one very important respect, count for less in the universe than mere inert matter. For matter has a kind of immortality ; at any rate, so far as our observation goes, it does not perish ; it only changes its form. We speak commonly of the growth and destruction of living things, of trees, and animals. But we must be careful how we use any such word as destruction, if we mean more than destruction of form ; or any such word as growth, if we imagine any real addition to the sum-total of matter in the universe. Existing matter may be combined into new forms of life ; and these forms may be dissolved, to be succeeded by new combinations of the same matter. Within the range of our experience, no matter ceases to exist ; it only takes new shapes, first in one being, and then in another. The body of the dead animal nourishes the plant, which in turn supplies nourishment for and is absorbed into the system of another animal. This animal, in turn, is resolved into its chemical elements by death, and the cycle begins afresh. It is possible that the predicted destruction of the world at the Last Day will be only a rearrangement of the sum-total of matter which now makes up the visible universe. It is possible that forms will change, beyond all power of imagination to conceive, but that there will be no real increase or diminution of existing material. Certainly every serious and consistent believer in God knows that there was a time when matter did not exist, and that a time may come when the Will which summoned it into existence may annihilate it. But within tracts of time, so vast as to strain and weary the mind which attempts to

contemplate them, matter has a practical immortality ; an immortality which would place the spirit of man at a great relative disadvantage if man's spirit ceased to exist at or soon after death. If man's spirit naturally perishes, the higher part of his nature is much worse off than the chemical ingredients of his body, or of the bodies of the animals around him ; since these certainly do survive in new forms. Observe that man's spirit cannot be resolved, like his body, into form and material ; the former perishing while the latter survives. Man's spirit either exists in its completeness, or it ceases to exist. The bodily form of William the Conqueror has long dissolved into dust. The material atoms which made up the body of William the Conqueror during his lifetime exist somewhere now under the pavement of the great church at Caen. But if the memory, and conscience, and will of the Conqueror have perished, then his spirit has ceased to be. There is no substratum below or beyond these which could perpetuate existence ; there is nothing spiritual which survives them. For the soul of man,—your soul and mine,—knows itself to be an indivisible whole ; a something which cannot be broken up into parts and enter into union with other minds and souls. Each man is himself : he can become no other. His memory, his affections, his way of thinking and feeling, are all his own : they are not transferable. If they perish, they perish altogether ; there are no atoms which survive them, and which can be worked up into other spiritual existences. Thus the extinction of an animal or vegetable is the extinction of that particular combination of matter, not of the matter itself : but the extinction of a soul, if it were possible, would be the total extinction of all that made it to be what it was. In the natural world, destruction and death are only change. In the spiritual world, the only possible analogous process would mean annihilation. And therefore it is a reasonable and very strong presumption that spirit is not, in fact, placed at such disadvantage when compared with matter ; and that, if matter survives the dissolution of organic forms, much more must spirit survive the dissolution of the material forms with which it has been associated.

These are the kind of considerations by which thoughtful men, living without the light of revelation, might be led to see the reasonableness, the very high probability, of a future life. They are not demonstrations which compel belief in man's immortality ;—to minds of a certain order they may seem poor and inconclusive. But they have led many a noble soul, before

now, up to the very gates of the Church of God. Do not let us think scorn of them as "mere philosophy;" do not let us forget that God teaches men up to a certain point through reason and nature and conscience, just as beyond it He teaches us through His Blessed Son. This teaching of nature is presupposed by Christianity. And it is no true service to our Master Jesus Christ to make light of this elementary teaching of God by reason and conscience, with the view of heightening the effect of Christ's work for man. At the same time, it is true that, outside the Jewish Revelation, the immortality of man was not treated by any large number of men as anything like a certainty. Jesus Christ assumed it as certain in all that He said with reference to the future life. And it is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ,—the tangible fact of His real survival of the collapse and sharpness of His Own death,—which has in this, as in so many other ways, opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers. What has been may be; what has been forbids the thought that it could not be. And thus the Christian Faith has brought "immortality to light"<sup>1</sup> through the Gospel. Christianity did not create immortality for man, but brought it to light as a fact of his nature, imperfectly apprehended until Christ died and rose from the dead. Christ our Lord does not make any one human being immortal any more than He invests any one with reason, or conscience, or will. Immortality, like these other gifts, is part of the outfit of man's nature; but then our Lord has poured a flood of light upon its meaning and reality.

And what a solemn fact is this immortality of ours, dimly apprehended by reason, and made certain by Revelation! What an unutterably solemn fact; that every single person in this vast congregation will live, must live, in some sphere or other, for ever! At this moment each of us has, or rather is made up of, memory, will, and conscience; each of these is altogether his own. A hundred years hence no one of us will be still in the body: we shall have passed to another sphere of being. But we shall subsist, each one with memory, will, and conscience intact, and utterly separate from any other living being. And ten thousand years hence, or if the imagination can take in these vast tracts of time, ten million years hence, it will be still the same. We shall still exist, each one with his memory, will, and conscience intact, separate from all other beings in our eternal resting-place.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim i 10.

## II.

And this brings us to consider what Christ's Words do mean : what is the kind of life which we Christians do or should live, because Christ our Saviour lives it.

Clearly, my brethren, something is meant by "Life" in such passages as this, which is higher than and beyond mere existence ; not merely beyond animal existence, but beyond the existence, the mere existence, of a spiritual being. We English use "life," in our popular language, in this sense of an existence which is not merely dormant or inert, or unfruitful, but which has a purpose and makes the most of itself. And the Greeks had an especial word to describe the true life of man, his highest spiritual energy ; a word to which our Lord, either in language, or probably by some modulation of His Voice, must have used an equivalent in the Syro-Chaldee dialect which He actually employed. This is the word employed, when our Lord says, "I am the Life ;"<sup>1</sup> and when St. Paul says, "Christ Who is our Life."<sup>2</sup> And thus in the present passage our Lord does not say, "Because I exist, ye shall exist also ;" but, "Because I live, ye shall live also." This life is existence in its best and highest aspects ; the existence of a being who makes the most of his endowments ; who consciously directs them towards their true object and purpose ; in whom they are invigorated, raised, transfigured, by the presence of a new power,—by grace.

This enrichment and elevation of being is derived from Christ our Lord : He is the Author of our new life, just as our first parent is the source of our first and natural existence. On this account St. Paul calls our Lord the Second Adam ;<sup>3</sup> implying that He would have a relation towards the human race, in some remarkable way resembling that of our first parent. And, in point of fact, He is the Parent of a race of spiritual men, who push human life to its highest capacities of excellence, just as Adam is the parent of a race of natural men who do what they can with their natural outfit. The Second Adam ! Remember that title of our Lord Jesus Christ. As natural human existence is derived from Adam, so spiritual or supernatural life is given to existing men by Christ. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we must also bear the image of the Heavenly."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 6.<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 4.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 45.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 49.



When our Lord was upon earth He communicated His Life to men, by coming in contact with them. What is said of Him on one occasion, and in reference to a particular miracle, is true of His whole appearance upon the earth:—"virtue went out of Him."<sup>1</sup> A common way of describing this is to say that He produced an impression deeper and more lasting than has any who has ever borne our form. Certainly He did this. He acted, He spoke. And His looks and gestures and bearing were themselves vivid and effective language. And men listened and observed. They had never seen or heard anything like it. They felt the contagion of a Presence, the influence of Which they could not measure; a Presence from Which there radiated a subtle, mysterious energy, which was gradually taking possession of them they knew not exactly how, and making them begin to live a new and a higher life. What that result was upon four men of very different types of character we may gather from the reports of the Life of Christ which are given us by the four holy Evangelists.

But at last He died, and rose, and disappeared from sight. And it is of this after-time that He says, "Because I live, ye shall live also." How does He communicate His Life when He is out of the reach of our senses; and when the creative stimulus of His visible Presence has been withdrawn?

The answer is, first, By His Spirit. What had been partly visible was now to be wholly an invisible process. The Spirit of Christ, that Divine and Personal Force, whereby the mind and nature of the Unseen Saviour is poured into the hearts and minds and characters of men—was to be the Lord and Giver of this Life, to the end of time. "He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."<sup>2</sup> "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His."<sup>3</sup> "But if any man be in Christ," through being baptized into the one Spirit, "he is the new creation. Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."<sup>4</sup>

And, secondly, the means whereby the Spirit of Christ does especially convey Christ's Life are the Christian Sacraments. The Sacraments are the guaranteed points of contact with our Unseen Saviour; for in them we may certainly meet Him and be invigorated by Him as we toil along the road of our pilgrimage. Ah! if the Sacraments were only symbols of a grace withheld, only memorials of an absent Christ, they would

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke vi. 19.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xvi. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 9.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.



have no legitimate place in the religion of our Lord. They would be on a par with the dead ceremonies of the Jewish law. They would belong appropriately to that old religion of mere types and shadows which, since the coming of Christ our Lord, has given place to a religion in which all is real. Certainly, in thus bestowing on us the Life of Christ, the Divine Spirit is not, as the old phrase has it, "tied to Sacraments:" for the Spirit of God fills the world, and turns persons and words and circumstances to account in His dealings with the soul of man. But Sacraments are chartered means of grace. And, such being our Lord's appointment, if we mean to live "because Christ lives," we cannot do without them. We could do without a purely symbolical washing in water, but "except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> We could do without bread and wine eaten in memory of an absent Christ Who died many centuries ago; but "except ye eat the Flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you."<sup>2</sup> And if we cannot understand how rites so simple should convey to us transcendent blessings and powers which come straight from the Heart of the invisible world; is this wonderful when we understand so little of the lower forms of life, of those simple yet most mysterious processes of nature which surround us on every side? What is life in the animal? what is it in the tree? why should food support it in the one case, and moisture in the other? Our commonplace and our scientific answers to these questions only reveal to us a world of mystery;—a world, the frontiers of which we know by heart, but the real nature of which is beyond us.

It is this new Life, thus bestowed by Christ our Lord, which makes it a blessing to have the prospect before us that we shall individually exist for ever. It is these new thoughts and affections and dispositions which come from Him, and which are, in fact, His Own, by which an endless existence can be raised to the level of Eternal Life. What this life is in its highest form we read in the records of that One Life, ideal and yet most real, Which was once lived on earth, and Which is described in the Gospels. What it may be, we see in those great saints and servants of His, who, since the coming of Christ, have lived from age to age, and have shown to the world, by their patience and heroism, how much His grace can make of our poor, frail, fallen humanity. What it is too often,

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. vi. 53.

we know in ourselves. We know how vast is the interval between the way in which we think, and express ourselves, and act, and the actions and language and thoughts which are set before us in the Gospels.

Why is our Christianity thus poor and feeble and depressed and disappointing? Why is it so unequal to its great traditions in the past, to the anticipations which, in our higher moments, we cherish for the future? Before our eyes is the same Ideal as That Which has shone upon all the generations of Christendom. We have the same hopes and fears, the same warnings and encouragements, as any of Christ's servants in days gone by. May it not be that we modern Christians have not seldom practically forgotten the fact that the true Life of man comes from Him alone Whose Name we bear? May it not be that we trust to our own energy, or common sense, for a power and for results which faith and love must receive from the pierced Hands of an Invisible Saviour? "Because I live, ye shall live also." We rely wholly on His Death for the pardon of our sins, and we do well. But He has more to give us than this. We must not rest content with half His Gospel. If He died for our sins, He "was raised again for our justification."<sup>1</sup> "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His Life."<sup>2</sup> Let us be up and doing. Let us look to the sources of our true outfit for the eternal world, and let us make the most of them. Our immortality is certain. But what sort of immortality is it to be? That is a question before which all else that concerns us fades away into insignificance. It can only be satisfactorily answered by the soul which hastens to draw water from the Wells of salvation;<sup>3</sup> which, having heard the pardoning words, "Thy sins, which were many, are forgiven thee,"<sup>4</sup> kneels on, in persevering love, at the Feet of the Divine Master; receives from Him the invigorating Gift which is needful for the Life Eternal; and, as the closing scene draws nigh, knows more and more clearly the truth of the gracious promise, "Because I live, thou shalt live also."

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iv. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. xii. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 10.

<sup>4</sup> St. Luke vii. 47.

## SERMON XXVI.

### THE VICTORY OF EASTER.

I ST. JOHN v. 4.

*That which is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

THE leading idea of Easter is Victory: victory over death; victory over sin, which is the cause of death; victory won by the Great Conqueror rising from His grave, and by His servants, who, at an immeasurable distance, tread in His footsteps here, and will reign with Him hereafter. Hence the selection of the passage of Holy Scripture before us as the Epistle for the First Sunday after Easter. The phrase, "overcometh the world," occurring as it does, after St. John's manner, not less than three times within the compass of two verses, opens to our view a subject in harmony with the season; while it also suggests considerations which the welcome presence in this Cathedral of some of the highest representatives of the Law renders appropriate to-day.<sup>1</sup>

#### I.

And here the first point to be decided is the precise meaning of the expression, "the world." Perhaps we feel that a certain haziness and indefiniteness attaches to it. And it is therefore to the purpose to observe that the word is used in the New Testament, and especially in St. John's writings, in three distinct senses.

By "the world" is meant, first of all, this visible universe,

<sup>1</sup> Preached before the Judges, the Lord Mayor, and the Corporation of London.

or at least this partieuclar globe on which we live. The Greeks called the universe, *Cosmos*, on account of the beauty of order which is observable throughout it ; but our word "world," in ordinary language, is restricted generally to the planet which is our home. And when our Lord, referring to the literal sun, says, that a man who walks by daylight stumbles not, because he seeth the "light of this world,"<sup>1</sup> He means by "world" this earthly abode of man. When, in His great Intereessory Prayer, He glances back at "the glory which I had with Thee before the *Cosmos* was,"<sup>2</sup> He means the visible order of things, the created universe. When St. John says, that if all the unrecorded things which Jesus did were to be written—every one,—he, the Evangelist, supposes that "even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written,"<sup>3</sup> it is plain that, whether he is thinking of the planet or the universe, he is at any rate thinking of physical nature. He is thinking of surface, and space, and cubic feet ; in short, of the material *Cosmos*. It is needless to say that the "world" in this sense is not a thing to overcome, any more than is the sea or the atmosphere. In this sense the "world" suggests no moral condemnation, nothing of the nature of a moral estimate or judgment of any kind. And we have only not to abuse it, but to make it subserve His glory Who made it and us. It is a palace in which we men pass our lives ; such is our Creator's will and bounty. It is a visible revelation, as His Apostle has told us, of the invisible order and beauty of His Uncreated Life.<sup>4</sup> Our duties towards it, are study, if possible ; in any case, reverent sympathy and admiration. For it is our Maker's handiwork, and "the works of the Lord are great," whether in the material or moral world ; "sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is worthy to be praised and had in honour ;" although it is "His Righteousness,"—the necessary moral qualities of His Nature,—which "endureth for ever"<sup>5</sup>

By the "world" again is meant, as in our every-day language, so in the speech of the New Testament, the sum-total of all living men ; human life in its completeness. It is the "world" in this sense into which our Lord "came," so Holy Scripture speaks, at His Incarnation. Into the material universe, He Who being Divine was already present with all His works,

<sup>1</sup> St. John xi. 9.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xvii. 5.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xxi. 25.<sup>4</sup> Rom. i. 20.<sup>5</sup> Ps. cxi. 2, 3.

could not come by anything of the nature of a local transfer of His Presence. When visibly present among men He spoke of Himself as "the Son of Man Which is in heaven;"<sup>1</sup> that is, as being also the Eternal Son of God. But into the world of collective human life He could and did come, by taking our nature upon Him; by being, as St. Paul speaks, "born of a woman, and made under the law;"<sup>2</sup> by robing Himself in a created Form, and so entering into and subjecting Himself to the conditions of human society and life. In this sense our Lord says, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father;"<sup>3</sup> and Martha confesses at Bethany, "I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God, Which should come into the world."<sup>4</sup> Every man, St. John says, who comes into this world is lightened by the true Light of it,<sup>5</sup> at least in respect of his reason. And when we are told that God "loved the world,"<sup>6</sup> that Christ is "the Saviour of the world,"<sup>7</sup> and "the Light of the world,"<sup>8</sup> and "the Bread Which giveth life unto the world;"<sup>9</sup> that He will judge the world,<sup>10</sup> and that He desires that the world should believe in His being sent from heaven;<sup>11</sup> the "world" clearly means the whole human family. The Almighty and Everlasting God hateth nothing that He has made, as He originally made it; and as it exists in His creative thought; and humanity, despite its corruptions and its crimes, is the object of His love and condescensions. This human world, too, by and of itself, is no more a thing to overcome than is the material universe: the great human family, of which we all are members, is not an enemy towards which we owe no other duties than war and victory. Misanthropy is not a Christian virtue; man, as man, is entitled to our best respect, care, affection, enthusiasm: "Honour all men;"<sup>12</sup> "Do good unto all men;"<sup>13</sup> "Be patient towards all men;"<sup>14</sup>—these are the Apostolic rules of duty to the world in the sense of collective humanity. It cannot therefore be the world in this sense to which the text refers.

There is a third sense of the word "world," to which our Lord introduces us by saying that "this is the condemnation,

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 13.<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 4.<sup>3</sup> St. John xvi. 28.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xi. 27.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. i. 9.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. iii. 16.<sup>7</sup> Ibid. iv. 42.<sup>8</sup> Ibid. viii. 12.<sup>9</sup> Ibid. vi. 33.<sup>10</sup> Ibid. xii. 31.<sup>11</sup> Ibid. xvii. 21.<sup>12</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 17.<sup>13</sup> Gal. vi. 10.<sup>14</sup> 1 Thess. v. 14.

that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”<sup>1</sup> Here it is clear that “the world” and “men” are equivalent expressions, and yet that especial stress is laid upon the sin which taints and warps human life. Human society as it actually is; as alienated from God; as formed upon and as fostering principles which are incompatible with His honour; as estranged from the life of God by the ignorance that is in men—is in this third sense “the world.” “This present evil world”<sup>2</sup> is the full designation which Scripture gives it. It is said to give a false peace of its own, utterly unlike that true peace which Christ gives to His servants. “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.”<sup>3</sup> It has a keen instinct, which at once detects and persecutes the holiness which exposes its real character: “The world cannot hate you,” said Jesus Christ to the Jews, “but Me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”<sup>4</sup> If the world hates the disciples, they know that it hated their Lord before it hated them.<sup>5</sup> If indeed they were of the world, the world would love his own; but because they are not of the world, but Christ has chosen them out of the world, therefore the world hateth them.<sup>6</sup> The world is spiritually blind: “it cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him.”<sup>7</sup> The contrast between the true disciples of Jesus Christ and the world, considered as corrupt human society, appears further in our Lord’s prediction of a coming time, in which “the disciples shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice;”<sup>8</sup> and in His Intercessorial Prayer, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me.”<sup>9</sup> The world is accordingly in this sense constantly connected in Scripture language with the energetic presence of sin. It is the sin of the world which, the Baptist tells us, the Lamb of God takes away.<sup>10</sup> When the Comforter comes, according to Christ’s prediction, “He will reprove the world of sin.”<sup>11</sup> Indeed St. John goes so far as to say that “the whole world lieth in wickedness,”<sup>12</sup> and so is contrasted with the Apostolic Church, which “knows that it is of the truth.”<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 19.<sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 4.<sup>3</sup> St. John xiv. 27.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. vii. 7.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xv. 18.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 19.<sup>7</sup> Ibid. xiv. 17.<sup>8</sup> Ibid. xvi. 20.<sup>9</sup> Ibid. xvii. 25.<sup>10</sup> Ibid. i. 29.<sup>11</sup> Ibid. xvi. 8.<sup>12</sup> 1 St. John v. 19.<sup>13</sup> Ibid. iii. 19.



Accordingly the phrase being "of the world," has a very serious significance in the mouth of our Lord and of the Beloved Disciple. Our Lord says of His Apostles that "the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."<sup>1</sup> The man who "is of the world" has a moral and spiritual relationship to the temper, feelings, character of the average mass of men. The world inspires and moulds him; it governs his sympathies, and forms his thoughts. He is a product of it; he is born, morally and mentally, of it. Thus St. John, when speaking of some men who were undoing God's work at Ephesus in his day, said, "They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, he bids Christians "love not the world, neither the things that are in the world." And then he gives as a reason, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."<sup>3</sup>

This then is the world which we have to overcome; not the beautiful universe wherein we live; not humanity with all its burden of sorrow, and all its capacity for greatness; but human life viewed as it exists apart from God. The "world" of St. John's Epistle is general society, thinking, feeling, acting, without any reference to the Being Who made it; making itself as completely its own ruler, its own end, its own reward, as if He did not exist. In this sense the "world" is not easy to overcome. It is not a thing of yesterday: it is a tradition of many ages, of many civilisations, which, after flowing on in the great current of human history, has come down, charged with the force of an accumulated prestige, even to us. To this great tradition of regulated ungodliness each generation adds something; something of force, something of refinement, something of social or intellectual power. The world is Protean in its capacity for taking new forms. Sometimes it is a gross idol-worship; sometimes it is a military empire; sometimes it is a cynical school of philosophers; sometimes it is the indifference of a *blasé* society, which agrees in nothing but in proscribing earnestness. The Church conquered it in the form of the pagan empire. But the world had indeed had its revenge when it could point to such Popes as were Julius II., or Alexander VI., or Leo X.; to such courts as

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvii. 14.<sup>2</sup> 1 St. John iv. 5.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ii. 15, 16.

were those of Louis XIV. or Charles II. ; for it had throned itself at the heart of the victorious Church. So now between the world and Christendom there is no hard and fast line of demarcation. The world is within the fold, within the sanctuary, within the heart, as well as without. It sweeps around each soul like a torrent of hot air, and makes itself felt at every pore of the moral system. Not that the world is merely a point of view, a mood of thought, a temper or frame of mind, having no actual, or as we should say, no objective existence. It has an independent existence. Just as the kingdom of God exists whether we belong to it or no, and yet, if we do belong to it, is, as our Lord has told us, within us<sup>1</sup> as an atmosphere of moral power and light ;—so the world, the kingdom of another being, exists, whether we belong to it or no, although our belonging to it is a matter of inward motives and character. The world penetrates like a subtle atmosphere in Christendom, while in heathendom it is organised as a visible system. But it is the same thing at bottom. It is the essential spirit of corrupt human life, taking no serious account of God, either forgetting Him altogether, or putting something in His place, or striking a balance between His claims and those of His antagonists. And thus friendship with it is “enmity with God,”<sup>2</sup> Who will have our all. And a first duty in His servants is to free themselves from its power, or, as St. John says, to overcome it.

## II.

How is the world to be overcome ?

Among many answers to this question, I notice only one to-day. There are men who answer, ‘ By scrupulous obedience to the laws of the land. Conform to the ideal of conduct prescribed by law. Avoid what the law condemns ; do what the law prescribes ; and you have conquered the world. This is the highest practicable ideal of human life. Not merely is the good man the good citizen : the good citizen is also necessarily the good man.’

Now there are two main reasons against acquiescing in this.

First, what is human law ? It is in theory always, and generally in fact, the application of moral truth, of justice, to the relations which exist between human beings. It is a digest of so much applied morality as society wants in order to

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xvii. 22.

<sup>2</sup> St. James iv. 4.

secure itself against insurrectionary selfishness and passion. But it is only a part of, an extract from, morality. It is not the whole. Those parts of the moral law which cannot be violated without danger to the social fabric, are enforced. The statute-book and the letter of the sixth and eighth commandments are fairly at one. But other commandments are not enforced, although they are just as truly parts of the Divine Law as are the precepts which protect life and property. Governments say that they do not want those other commandments of God in order to secure the preservation of society. But then it is plain that to obey human law is not the same thing as to obey the law of God. Human law gives us one standard of conduct; the law of God another. Human law insists upon honesty and respect for life and person; the law of God upon charity and purity as well. To obey human law scrupulously is perfectly consistent with disobedience to vital features of the law of God. Obedience to human law is so far from implying victory over the world, that it only involves that exact amount of obedience upon which the world itself insists.

Again, human law is only a rule of outward conduct. It does not reach to the region of motive. As the old maxim says, "*De occultis non judicat*;" it concerns itself with that which meets the eye, and falls upon the ear. Outward propriety, as distinct from inward rectitude, is all that it can hope to enforce, and is enough to serve its purpose.

But does such outward propriety involve victory over the world? May it not consist with thoroughly bad motives which, in the sight of the All-seeing Ruler of the universe, have the value of finished acts, and which have only not become visible because they lacked the opportunity of circumstance? Does not this outward conformity to law leave the root of evil within us untouched, as it was untouched in the case of those Pharisees who cleansed the outside of the cup and platter in all departments of conduct,<sup>1</sup> but were within what our Lord described with such trenchant severity? The Pharisees, and the society to which they, more than any others, gave the tone, constituted the "world" of the Gospel history. But if obedience to law had been the secret of vanquishing it, they would have been among its most distinguished conquerors.

No; if the world is to be overcome, it will not itself furnish

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxiii. 25.

us with the secret of victory. It will, no doubt, disguise its empire. It will lead us, if necessary, to that particular point on the road to freedom which may half satisfy our aspirations, without compromising its own power. But if we would conquer it we must lay hold on something outside and independent of it; upon a vision of truth, upon a motive to exertion which altogether transcends its sphere.

Hence "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith is the hand by which the soul lays hold upon a Truth, a Power, a Being higher and more beautiful than any which are obvious to sense. Thus the soul gains a support in its struggle for emancipation and victory which is equal to its needs. "Who is he that overcometh the world but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Believe that He is only the son of man; the wisest, if you will, and the best of men; yet the requisite force is lacking. For practically you only assent to a fact which is bounded by the frontier of human existence. But believe that Jesus is the Son of God; that His Life was that of God manifest in the flesh;<sup>1</sup> that His Death was that of the Everlasting Son, purchasing His Church with His Own Blood;<sup>2</sup> that His Mercy and His power are alike boundless; and that He helps and befriends us, by His Spirit and Sacraments on earth, and by His Majestic Intercession in heaven; and life is irradiated by a new idea of its solemnity and its blessedness. Reason, indeed, can teach us to despair of the world, when she leads us to some grave, such as are many around you here, and points to the worthlessness of wealth and honours, which must fade so soon and so entirely. But faith does not teach only the negative side of the lesson. Faith insists that Redemption by the Son of God makes life worth living, and thus enables us to rate the world at its true value.

### III.

That this is so, is plain if we consider how the world acts upon us, one by one. For the world is very jealous of any appearance of revolt against its authority. And it has at command a machinery which is well calculated to repress the first symptoms of disaffection.

1. It acts, first, secretly, but most powerfully, by public

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Acts xx. 28.

opinion. Public opinion is the intellectual arm of the world. It is exactly the same in no two countries ; in no two centuries ; it might be true to say, in no two following years. It has its leading and its subordinate organs. There is a public opinion in nations, in particular places, in particular classes and circles. Between these there are many and startling contradictions ; and yet there is unity. There is unity of temper ; unity as to the general principles to be kept in view, amid differences as to detail. Penetrating the differences of different classes, countries, interests, there is a common opinion in each age, in each country, which is sufficiently consistent with itself, and sufficiently powerful to make itself felt as the voice of the world ; the voice which the mass of men at once utter and obey.

Do I say that it is a duty on the part of every Christian to contradict the whole public opinion of the country and the age in which he lives ? Certainly not. In the worst times, in the lowest civilisations, public opinion necessarily affirms some truth. And when the Church of Christ has more or less influence in leavening society ; when society calls itself Christian, and sets store upon the designation ; it is clear that public opinion must, from the nature of the case, affirm a great deal of truth. This being certain, a depreciation of or contempt for all public opinion as such is evidently misleading : it is a sure sign of folly or fanaticism. But much more misleading is entire submission to it. Whatever be its authority in pronouncing upon material interests, it is no safe guide in dealing with spiritual questions. For it represents not the highest, purest, most disinterested thought of the time on these subjects ; as also it certainly does not represent the lowest and most degraded. It is essentially a middle term ; a compromise between sublime truth and wild error, between lofty goodness and downright selfishness. And its very moderation, whereby it so exactly represents the world, is an element of its power.

To do justice to public opinion, and yet to be independent of it, a man must have hold on a higher criterion and test of truth. We are the slaves of the human until we are in communion with the Divine. Years often will pass in a man's life, until some turn of events, some danger to truth or right, reveals his hold on the Invisible to himself and to the world. At such times it is that men take their sides, and show what they are. On the one side they whisper,—‘Don't you see which way the current is flowing ? Be prudent, and don't quarrel with your bread and butter.’ On the other they pro-



claim, in trembling accents of humble thankfulness, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true;"<sup>1</sup> "We ought to obey God rather than men."<sup>2</sup>

2. The world acts upon us, secondly, by ridicule. Ridicule is often the voice of public opinion irritated at resistance to its empire. And it may be an instrument of terrible power.

Many men who would pass through the fire for what they believe to be right cannot face a sneer. They have abundant physical courage; the courage of animals with strong nerves. They have little moral courage; the courage of men with sensitive consciences and strong wills. Moral courage is indeed a higher courage than physical courage. It is more difficult to sustain: it gets much less encouragement from the results of victory. Yet why should ridicule be so formidable? What is a sneer, in most cases, but the confession that an argument is not at command? As Dr. Johnson said, you cannot refute a sneer. But this is because there is nothing solid to refute. The cleverest things in an infidel writer like Voltaire are sneers; they are not arguments. But they did their work upon two-thirds of the French people none the less powerfully for that. Until a man has learned to estimate ridicule at its true value, he has not a chance of overcoming the world; whether it be the world of a public school, or the world of a business establishment, or the world of a learned profession, or the great world which includes all these, of mixed and common English life.

And the best antidote to ridicule is devotion to a friend. Ridicule tells powerfully against fancy theories: its shafts fall powerless on loyal hearts. Laugh at a new social or political doctrine, and you may rend it to pieces more readily than by argument. Laugh at men whose hearts have been won by a character of great strength and beauty, and you will be hoarse with laughter without injuring anybody. Now faith reveals to Christians a Living Person, Who is the object of their enthusiastic love. And in the depth of that love there is a store of moral power which the ridicule of the world cannot touch.

3. The world acts upon us, lastly, by persecution. In the first ages of the Church, when the world was confessedly

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. John v. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Acts v. 29



pagan, it made great use of this instrument for enforcing its supremacy. It imprisoned and killed Christians, from the days of Nero to the days of Diocletian. It persecuted by social exclusiveness, by inflicting loss of property and position, by bloody tortures, by death. The mildest forms of persecution are all that are now possible in this country. But if a man is deprived of advantages which he would otherwise have enjoyed ; if he is met by a cold bow or a vacant stare, when he expects a cordial greeting ; if he feels that he is under a ban, because he has dared to obey his conscience, when obedience is unwelcome or unpopular ; he is, to all intents and purposes, persecuted. And if he can stand this persecution patiently, calmly, silently, so much the better. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."<sup>1</sup>

But how is he to stand it ? "By seeing Him that is invisible,"<sup>2</sup> so the Apostle answers. Who that has had to undergo a painful operation does not know the support that is given by holding the hand of a sympathising friend until it is all over ? And faith places the hand of the persecuted in the Hand of Christ. "Fear not," He says, "for I am with thee : I have called thee by thy name ; thou art Mine."<sup>3</sup> It is thus that the world, when doing its worst, is vanquished. Thus was it vanquished by young and weak and friendless men and women and children in the first ages of the Church, who were "strong in faith : " thus is it vanquished now by every one who resolves for Christ's sake to live a life of high duty and self-denial, amid opposition and under difficulties.

It is faith in the Son of God, Who of His unspeakable mercy took our flesh, and died, and rose again for us, that enables us to rise to a higher, purer, truer conception of what life is and means, and so to overcome the world. Human law cannot do this. But law, in a Christian land, makes the task easier. Law is the cover, the fence which shelters the infant life of religion, and protects its tender growth from violence and outrage. And religion in turn reinforces law. Religion makes obedience to law welcome, "not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake : "<sup>4</sup> it arrests at the fountain-head those passions which, in their unrestrained indulgence, are at war with law. Law and religion work on the same side, and in parallel lines ; law punishes that which religion would prevent. Religion does much more work in the conscience than is neces-

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. v. 10.<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 27.<sup>3</sup> Isa. xliii. 1.<sup>4</sup> Rom. xiii. 5.

sary for the purposes of law ; but, excepting under circumstances which are happily exceptional, law, when prosecuting its stern errands of justice, can appeal to the sanction of religion.

For the complete wellbeing of man, nothing can be more untoward than a collision between the behests of the religious conscience and the public administration of justice. The Roman magistrates and the martyrs whom they sentenced in the first ages of the Church, ought in the interests of humanity to have been on the same side. For if human life is protected by order, it is only permanently enriched by sacrifice ; and as prevention is better than cure, so the motives which make crime unwelcome or impossible are more powerful agents than the strong arm which punishes its perpetrators. Law, in short, cannot overcome the world : it can only regulate its course. If men would rise above it they must gaze on Him Who overcame it when He died upon the Cross and rose from the grave, and Who permits His true servants to lay hold on His pierced Hands, and to share in His glorious victory.

## SERMON XXVII.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

ST. JOHN X. 11.

*Jesus said, I am the Good Shepherd.*

PERHAPS no one Gospel, during the whole course of the Church year, speaks to us more directly, more persuasively, than that which is appointed for to-day. The Sunday of the Good Shepherd,<sup>1</sup> as in some parts of Christendom this day has been called, has an interest for us, "the sheep of His pasture,"<sup>2</sup> which need not be insisted on.

#### I.

In the first eighteen verses of the tenth chapter of St. John there are three distinct allegories. First comes the allegory of the Shepherd; next that of the Door; lastly that of the Good, or Beautiful, or Ideal Shepherd. These, I say, are allegories rather than parables. An allegory differs from a parable, as a transparency might differ from a painting on canvas. In the parable, the narrative has a body and substance, so to call it, of its own; it has a value which is independent of its application or interpretation; it often lends itself to more interpretations than one. In the allegory, the narrative suggests its one obvious interpretation step by step; narrative and interpretation are practically inseparable; it is impossible to look steadily at the picture presented to the mind's eye by the allegory, without perceiving the real persons and events to which it refers, moving almost without disguise behind it. One illustration of this occurs in the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, which St. Paul interprets for us in the Second Lesson of this after-

<sup>1</sup> The Second Sunday after Easter.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. c. 2.

noon.<sup>1</sup> And another will be supplied as we proceed with the passage before us.

In order to understand the three allegories, we must remind ourselves that in the East a sheepfold is not a covered building, but a simple enclosure of some extent, surrounded by a wall or palisade. Within this enclosure are collected many flocks of sheep, which have wandered far and wide during the day under the care of shepherds. The shepherds lead them to the enclosure or fold at nightfall; and during the night a single herdsman, here called the porter, keeps the gate, and guarantees the safety of the collected flocks. In the morning the various shepherds return to the fold to claim their respective flocks at the hand of the night-porter: they knock at the gate of the enclosure and he lets them in. Then each for himself separates his own flock from the others with which during the night they have been intermixed; each again leads his sheep forth to the day's pasturage.

Our Lord's three allegories place us face to face with the pastoral life of the East at three different periods of the Eastern day. In the first, the allegory of the Shepherd, it is still the freshness of the early morning. The dew is on the ground: the shepherds are returning to the fold to claim their flocks, which have been assembled within it during the night. If a robber endeavours to lead away some of the sheep, he must find entrance into the fold in some dishonourable way. He does not attempt the door, where he knows that he will be recognised and arrested. He climbs over some other part of the enclosure. He comes for no good purpose; he comes only to kill and to destroy. The porter only opens the gate to the regular shepherds: the shepherd calls his own sheep by name, and they know his voice. He leads them forth from the fold: he does not drive, he walks before them: they follow him, because they know him and trust him.

The second allegory is that of the Door. Here we are in the hot noontide of the Eastern day. The fold which is here implied, without being mentioned, is not that in which the sheep were collected during the night. It is a day-enclosure, to which, during the hours of burning sunshine, the sheep may retire for rest and shade, and out of which they may wander at will to seek for pasture. In this allegory there is no mention of a shepherd: he has disappeared. The most important feature is the door of the mid-day fold. The door of this fold

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv. 21-31.

is the guarantee of safety and of liberty to the sheep. "I am the Door," says our Lord : "by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture."<sup>1</sup>

In the third allegory, that of the Good Shepherd, we have reached the evening. Already the shadows are lengthening upon the hills, and the shepherds have collected their flocks to lead them to the night-enclosure. As the darkness gathers, the flock is attacked by wolves who lie in ambush for it. The Good Shepherd, who loves his sheep with a personal affection, throws himself between his imperilled flock and their cruel enemy, and in doing so sacrifices himself : "he giveth his life for the sheep."<sup>2</sup> This allegory of the Good Shepherd is not a mere repetition of the first allegory of the Shepherd, although they both refer to One Person and One only. The shepherd who knocks at the door in the early morning is contrasted with the thief and the robber who climbs into the fold some other way. The Good Shepherd who gives his life for his flock at nightfall is contrasted with the hireling or mercenary, who flies at the approach of the wolf, and sacrifices his flock to his own personal safety.

## II.

The question arises, What would our Lord's hearers have been meant, in the first instance, to understand by this language ? And we must look for an answer in what was actually going on at the time, in Judæa, before the very eyes of the Speaker. When our Lord spoke of a fold, every religious Jew would think of the commonwealth or Church of Israel. In the pastoral language of the Prophets the old Theocratic nation was the fold of the Lord Jehovah. When our Lord spoke of a shepherd, every religious Jew would think of the expected Messiah. In the twenty-third Psalm David applies the figure to the Lord Jehovah as the guardian of his own life : "The Lord is my Shepherd : therefore can I lack nothing. He shall feed me in a green pasture, and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort."<sup>3</sup> But in Ezekiel<sup>4</sup> and Zechariah<sup>5</sup> Jehovah is announced as destined to appear once more to His people, as the Shepherd of Israel. In Zechariah especially, the Shepherd of Israel is represented as making a last effort to rescue the sacred flock from slaughter. But he only attaches to himself the poorest of the flock, and after a month's toil receives thirty

<sup>1</sup> St. John x. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xxiii. 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Ezek. xxxiv. 1-22.

<sup>5</sup> Zech. xi. 3-12.

pieces of silver, that is, the wages of a labourer of the lowest class, as he breaks his staff and leaves the flock that will not be saved from bad shepherds. The whole of this instructive but difficult passage<sup>1</sup> was, we may reverently conjecture, especially before our Lord's Mind when He was pronouncing these allegories. He was Himself, in His Own thought, the Shepherd of prophecy, Who had come to the gate of the Jewish commonwealth to discover and lead forth His Own sheep. But who was the porter? Among various explanations, there is one answer which would have occurred to those who heard our Lord, and who knew the history of their own time; and it cannot but occur to any careful student of St. John's Gospel. The porter is St. John the Baptist. It was to the Baptist, as last and greatest of the prophets, keeping in the wilderness the gate of God's ancient fold, that Christ came at the beginning of His Ministry, as the Gospel dawn was breaking on the earth. It was from among the Baptist's followers that Christ received His first disciples. "John bare Him witness;"<sup>2</sup> this is the burden of the references to the Baptist in the last Gospel. And who were the thieves and robbers, who had not come into the fold through the gate? Pre-eminently, we cannot doubt, the Pharisees, who had established their great authority among the Jewish people by much hypocrisy and violence. They had not entered by the gate; their influence was not based on the old Mosaic Law, but on bad traditions which had grown up around it, and which they beyond others had fostered. And the Baptist, when he encountered them, as St. Matthew tells us, had not kept terms with them: they were "a generation of vipers," whom he warned to flee from the wrath to come, and to bring forth fruits meet for repentance.<sup>3</sup>

The whole scene of the first allegory is laid at the commencement of Christ's Ministry. In the second He has led out His Own from the old Jewish fold into the pastures of the new kingdom. There is no shepherd mentioned here: Christ is the Door. The new fold, of which He is the Door, is the Gospel enclosure, in which His Person is everything: through Him the sheep go forth for pasture and retire within for safety. Here again He contrasts Himself with the Pharisees as thieves and robbers: the image of the Door melts away into His living Person. In the third allegory, the last days of His Ministry, which were already present when He was uttering

<sup>1</sup> Compare Pusey, *Minor Prophets*, pp. 568 *seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> St. John i. 15.

<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. iii. 7, 8.



these words, are before His Mind. The evening is upon Him : He is near His Passion. The wolf is lying in ambush for the flock ; the hireling shepherd, true to his nature, flees ; the Good Shepherd gives His Life. Who is the wolf here ? As always, the Pharisee party, which preyed upon the religious life of the people. Who is the hireling ? Certainly not the Pharisee, against whom he is the natural defender. By the hireling, our Lord's hearers would have understood the Jewish priesthood. It is a mistake to suppose that the interests and views of the Pharisees and of the priesthood were identical. The Pharisees were to a very great extent a lay sect : they had obtained a preponderating influence over the religious life of the Jewish people, and had corrupted it very seriously. The priesthood ought to have held the Pharisees in check : they would have done so had they been faithful. The priesthood were not indisposed to believe in our Lord : in St. Stephen's day "a great multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith."<sup>1</sup> Even before the Passion, "many of the chief priests believed in Jesus, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue."<sup>2</sup> The priests did not dare to resist the Pharisees ; and Jesus was the Victim of Pharisee indignation. It was already plain what would follow. Our Lord foreknew His sufferings : but an ordinary observer of the forces which were then governing the political life of Judæa might have divined the meaning of the words, "I am the Good Shepherd : the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep."

### III.

When our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd, is He using a title which lost its value when He ceased to live visibly upon the earth ? Or has this title any meaning for us Christians, for you and me, at the present day ?

Here we cannot but observe that, writing some forty years after the Ascension, St. Peter calls Jesus Christ, as in to-day's Epistle, the Shepherd of souls ;<sup>3</sup> and St. Paul, the great Shepherd of the sheep.<sup>4</sup>

In the earliest ages of the Christian Church, when the stress of cruel persecution obliged the faithful, driven from the public places of Rome, to take refuge in the Catacombs which were burrowed out beneath the crowded streets of the pagan

<sup>1</sup> Acts vi. 7.    <sup>2</sup> St. John xii. 42.    <sup>3</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 25.    <sup>4</sup> Heb. xiii 20.

city, there was One Figure above all others, which, in their dark prison-homes, Christians delighted to sketch in rude outline on the vaults under which they prayed. It was the figure of the Good Shepherd. Sometimes His Apostles were ranged on either side of Him. Sometimes the allegory was more closely adhered to, and the sheep were standing around with upturned faces, eagerly intent upon their Deliverer and Guide. Sometimes, as more especially in later art, He was carrying a wanderer on His shoulder, or folding a lamb to His bosom, or gently leading the sick and weary of His flock. There was something in the Figure which represented the tender and active care of our Divine Master, moving, although unseen, among His persecuted flock, to cheer and to save them. And ever since those days of persecution, when Christ has been asked to bless a work of mercy for relieving the suffering, or teaching the ignorant, or delivering the captives, or raising the fallen, it has been as the Good Shepherd of the human race. The title has an attractive power that is all its own.

Not that it is easy for us at once to enter into the full meaning of this beautiful image. To do so we must know something about ourselves, and something more about the Person of our Gracious Saviour.

a. We must know our own weakness, our dependence, our need of a heavenly Guide and Friend. We must sincerely feel that, face to face with the eternal world and its awful Monarch, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, is a fatal mistake. An old pagan Roman did not feel this. And therefore, in his unconverted state, he spurned the idea of having a Good Shepherd in heaven Whom it was his business to love and worship. It was humiliating to him. It was intolerable that he, with the blood of the Scipios and the Cæsars in his veins, should think and speak of himself as a sheep. To him the Christians who could do so appeared a set of poor-spirited, degraded, and contemptible people, who had never known what it was to have a part in the majesty of the Roman name. What did he want of a Shepherd in heaven? He depended on himself; he trusted himself; and if life became intolerable, he probably meant to put an end to himself. That he should be led, pastured, folded, guarded, delivered—all this was out of the question. He did not want to be placed under a sense of obligation to any one; least of all, under the sense of an obligation so utterly beyond discharge. Certainly he might

have reflected that he owed the gift of existence itself to some higher Being, and that this was a debt that he could never repay. But how many of us, Christians, go through life without ever seriously thinking what it is to have been created ; what it is to have a Creator ; One Being to Whose bounty all that we are and have, moment by moment, is due ? What wonder if, like the old pagan Roman, we do not enter into the happiness of devotion to the Good Shepherd ? Until the proud heart is broken by a sense of personal sin, and by the love of God, revealed to the soul in His beauty and in His justice, the figure of the Good Shepherd would naturally be repulsive, as inflicting upon an ordinary man some sense of personal humiliation.

β. Moreover, if we would enter into what is meant by the Good Shepherd, we must know and believe the full and awful truth about the Divine Nature of Jesus Christ.

If Jesus Christ is merely a man, how could He be, in any rational sense, a Good Shepherd to you and me ? It is now eighteen centuries and a half since He left the earth. And if we only think of Him as a departed saint, resting somewhere in the bosom of God, we have no reason whatever to attribute to Him a pastoral interest in the multitude of Christians who look up to Him, day by day, hour by hour, for help and guidance. Can we suppose that any merely created being could thus be a superintending providence, an all-considering, all-embracing Love, to multitudes ? Yet when our Lord says, "I am the Good Shepherd," He clearly disengages Himself from the historical incidents, the political circumstances which immediately surrounded Him. He places Himself above the narrowing conditions of time : He will be to all the ages what He is to the faithful few in and about Jerusalem. It is as when He says, "I am the Light,"<sup>1</sup> or "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life,"<sup>2</sup> or "I am the Resurrection and the Life,"<sup>3</sup> or "I am the True Vine."<sup>4</sup> All this language in the mouth of a merely human teacher would be pretentious, inflated, insufferable. We cannot conceive the best man we have ever known in life speaking of himself as the Good Shepherd of men. To do so would be to forfeit his claims to our love, our reverence, even to our respect. Why is it not so in our Lord ? Because there is that in Him, beyond yet inseparable from His Perfect Manhood, which justifies His

<sup>1</sup> St. John viii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid xiv. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xi. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. xv. 1.

language ; so that in Him it is not pretentious, not inflated, not absurd, not blasphemous, but, on the contrary, perfectly natural and obvious. We feel, in short, that He is Divine. And such sayings as "Before Abraham was I am ;"<sup>1</sup> "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father ;"<sup>2</sup> "I and the Father are One,"<sup>3</sup>—are in the background. They explain and justify what He says about His being the Ideal Shepherd of human souls. But it is because He is also Man that such a title befits Him. Because He is no abstract providence, but a Divine Person, Who has taken our human nature upon Him, and Who, through it, communicates with us and blesses us, He is the Good Shepherd of His people.

## IV.

Let us reflect what this truth involves as to our relations with our Blessed Saviour.

1. As the Good Shepherd, He knows His sheep. He knows us ; He knows us one by one ; He knows all about each of us. "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep." He knows us, not merely as we seem to be, but as we are. Others look us in the face day by day, and we them. They touch the surface of our real life ; perhaps they see a little way below the surface. But "what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him ?"<sup>4</sup> What do they know of that which passes in the inmost sanctuary of the reason, of the conscience, of the heart ? Nay ; do they know much of our outward circumstances ; of our trials, our struggles, our exceptional difficulties, or what we deem such ? Citizens of this vast metropolis, we live amid a multitude, while yet we are alone. But there is One Being Who knows all ; upon Whom nothing that passes is lost ; to Whom nothing that affects us is matter of indifference. To Him all hearts are open, all desires known ; from Him no secrets are hid.<sup>5</sup> All the warps of our self-love, all the depth and corruption of our hearts, all that we might have been, all that we are, is spread out as a map before His eyes. Each moment that passes adds something which He has already anticipated ; but yet the addition of new details forfeits nothing in the clearness of His comprehensive survey. It is because He knows us thus

<sup>1</sup> St. John viii. 58.<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 11<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiv. 9.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. x. 30.<sup>5</sup> Collect in the Communion Service.

perfectly that He is able to help us, guide us, feed us, save us, if we will, even to the uttermost.<sup>1</sup>

2. While knowing us perfectly, the Good Shepherd has an entire sympathy with each of us. He is not a hard guardian, who keeps us in order without understanding our difficulties. He is touched, as the Apostle says, with a feeling of our infirmities.<sup>2</sup> His true Human Nature is the seat and source of His perfect sympathy; to which the image of a shepherd, if taken alone, would do less than perfect justice. Nothing that affects any of us is a matter of indifference to Him. He is not interested merely or chiefly in the noble, or the wealthy, or the intellectual, or the well-bred. Wherever there is a human soul seeking the truth, a human heart longing to lavish its affection upon the Eternal Beauty, there He is at hand, unseen yet energetic, entering with perfect sympathy into every trial, anticipating, in ways we little dream of, every danger; not indeed suspending our probation by putting us out of the way of temptation, but with each temptation also making a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.<sup>3</sup>

3. For this sympathy is not a burst of unregulated affection; it is guided by perfect prudence, by the highest reason. In the days of His earthly Ministry this was especially remarkable. He dealt with men according to their characters and capacities. He did not put new cloth on an old garment, or new wine into old bottles.<sup>4</sup> He did not ask His disciples to imitate the austere life of the followers of the Baptist: He knew them too well. The days would come for that by and by. He did not at once unfold to them all the Truth He had to tell about His Own Divine Person, about His kingdom, about the means of living the new life. These truths would have shocked them, if prematurely announced. "I have many things to say unto you," He said, "but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth."<sup>5</sup> Those who were yet in the infancy of the Christian life were fed with milk; strong meat was reserved for others who knew more and could bear more.<sup>6</sup>

So it has been ever since. If we have enjoyed opportunities, or have been denied them, this has not happened by chance. The Great Shepherd of the sheep has ordered it. He has

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii. 25.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 15.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. x. 13.<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. ix. 16, 17.<sup>5</sup> St. John xvi. 12, 13<sup>6</sup> Heb. v. 12-14.



proportioned our duties, our trials, our advantages, our drawbacks, to our real needs—to our characters. We may have disputed His wisdom, or we may have made the most of it. But it is not the less certainly a characteristic of His government. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be,”<sup>1</sup> is a promise for all time.

4. Above all, as the Good Shepherd, Christ is disinterested. He gains nothing by watching, guarding, feeding us. He seeks not ours, but us. We can make no addition to His glory : He seeks us for our own sakes, not for His. He spent His earthly Life among the villages and hamlets of a remote province, when He might have illuminated and awed the intellectual centres of the world. He spared Himself no privations in His toil for souls. So absorbing was His labour, that He had at times no leisure so much as to eat.<sup>2</sup> Persecutions, humiliations, rebuffs, sufferings, could not diminish the ardour of His zeal. And He crowned all by voluntarily embracing an agonising death, in order to save His flock. Once for all, eighteen centuries ago, He gave His life for the sheep. But His death is just as powerful to deliver from the jaws of the wolf as it has ever been. Self-sacrifice, such as that on Calvary, does not lose its virtue with the lapse of years : the Precious Blood is to-day as powerful to save, as, when warm and fresh, It ebbed forth from the Wounds of the Crucified. For It is, as an Apostle says, “the Blood of the everlasting covenant ;”<sup>3</sup> and the Great Shepherd of the sheep has been raised from the dead that It may plead for us perpetually in the courts of heaven. We look up to Him on His throne, and here in His temple we sing, day after day, that “we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.”<sup>4</sup> Do we mean it ? We kneel day by day, and confess that we have erred and strayed from the Eternal Father’s ways, which are also His, “like lost sheep.”<sup>5</sup> Do we mean it ? Have we yet returned to “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls” ?<sup>6</sup> Do we endeavour to know Him, as, whether we will or not, He certainly knows us ? We need a Guide through the embarrassments of life : do we recognise one in Him ? We need a Physician for our moral wounds ; a source of strength in our temptations ; a rule and measure of holiness ; an arm to lean on in the valley of the shadow of death.<sup>7</sup> All this He is, and much more ; but

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxxiii. 25.    <sup>2</sup> St. Mark vi. 31.    <sup>3</sup> Heb. xiii. 20.    <sup>4</sup> Ps. xcv. 7.

<sup>5</sup> General Confession.    <sup>6</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 25.    <sup>7</sup> Ps. xxiii. 4.



have we any practical knowledge of His being so? When He has fixed His Eye upon us at some turning-point of life; when He has reached out His shepherd's crook, and beckoned us to follow Him, have we obeyed? No doubt faithfulness, submission, courage, perseverance, were necessary on our part. But did He not merit these very graces for us? And has He done so much for us; and shall we do nothing—nothing—for Him?

Or if this has been with us as He would wish, are we now associating ourselves with His work? As we all may join in the intercessions of the Great High Priest, so we all may work under the guidance of the Good Shepherd. How many a work of mercy in the Church of God has that gracious and tender Figure inspired, which else had been denied to poor suffering human beings! By our individual exertions, and by strengthening the hands and hearts of His ministers; by doing our best to raise their ideal and standard of work and life; by entering with sympathy and humility into cases of misery and ignorance which might well have been our own; we may all of us, laymen as well as pastors, women as well as men, simple and unlearned as well as lettered and wise, have a part in promoting among our fellows the knowledge of that Redeeming Love, which is the glory of our Divine Master Jesus, and our own only ground of hope for time and eternity.

## SERMON XXVIII.

### REVERENCE.

REV. I. 17, 18.

*And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. And He laid His Right Hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not: I am the First and the Last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.*

THIS is St. John's account of what happened when he saw our Lord Jesus Christ, some forty years at the least after the Ascension, in the island of Patmos. St. John had been banished there by the Emperor of the day, and, according to the tradition, was condemned to labour in the mines. But the time of persecution was to him, as it has been so often to others, a time of spiritual blessing. When exile and suffering have detached the sympathies from the world of sense, the soul looks upwards, is endowed with a keener insight, pierces the clouds, beholds, as never before, the Unseen. The vision in Bethel was enjoyed by Jacob while he was being persecuted by Esau.<sup>1</sup> The vision of the burning bush was vouchsafed to Moses when he was flying from the face of Pharaoh.<sup>2</sup> The vision of God on the chariot of the Cherubim was granted to Ezekiel when he was a captive on the banks of the Chebar.<sup>3</sup> The sight of the opened heavens, and of Jesus standing at the right hand of God, burst upon St. Stephen when he was already in the agony of his martyrdom.<sup>4</sup> St. John had reclined on the very Breast of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> But ere he could see the things invisible to sense and the things hereafter he must be sent to Patmos; as he says, "for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ;" as "a companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxvii. 41-45; xxviii. 10-22.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. ii. 15; iii. 1-22.

<sup>3</sup> Ezek. i. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> Acts vii. 54-60.

<sup>5</sup> St. John xiii. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. i. 9.

And this vision, with which the Book of the Revelation opens, is especially welcome to Christians in the Easter season, when we are endeavouring to realise the spiritual Presence of Christ in His Church, as suggested and secured to us by His Resurrection from the dead. Let us look at it this afternoon under a single aspect; the effect it produced upon St. John. "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." It undoubtedly suggests a great many other considerations. But it teaches us one lesson, very necessary for these and for all times; the lesson, and, let me add, the secret of reverence. "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead."

### I.

Every age has its moral as well as its social and political tastes; and reverence is not one of the most popular virtues at the present day. Many a man who would be anxious to be considered brave, or truthful, or even patient and benevolent, would not be altogether pleased to hear himself described as a reverent man. Probably he would not be able to assign any reason for this: it is a matter of instinct with him rather than of deliberate judgment. Still, if he could take what we call his instinct to pieces, he would find that it embodies or reflects some such ideas as these. He would find that he is afraid of being thought reverent, because reverence is, as he supposes, a poor-spirited sort of virtue; hostile to energy, and hostile to inquiry. Reverence he imagines to be the temper of mind which readily crouches down to the falsehood which it dares not confront; which decorates fables lest it should have to examine them; which is easy-going, soft, feeble, passive. Reverence, he thinks, lives in the past, lives in the unreal, lives in sentiment; lives for the sake of existing institutions, good or bad. It is naturally fostered by their advocates, while it is the foe of active virtue in all its forms. It is the foe of strong masculine characters; the foe of improvement which is thorough and fearless; the foe of all that belongs to true human progress.

This idea of reverence is entertained by many persons who are in no degree responsible for the shape it takes, and who are quite sincere in entertaining it. They do but take in and accept and act on judgments which are floating in the mental atmosphere which they breathe. For the influence of these judgments upon themselves, until they have analysed it, they

are no more responsible than they are for the water-supply of London. But, of course, originally, this atmosphere has been made what it is by various contributors and experimentalists. And among these have been some who knew quite well that, if you want to get rid of a doctrine or a virtue, the best way is boldly to caricature it. Just as the atoning virtue of our Lord's Death may be discredited if it is ingeniously represented to be at variance with the Divine Justice ; just as the grace of the Christian Sacraments may be discredited by suggesting that it is akin to magical or materialising theories of God's agency ; so, if it be our object to make reverence an unpopular virtue, nothing is easier than to suggest that it is merely homage to sentiment, or even homage to falsehood ; that it is dramatic and unreal ; that it is opposed to moral and to mental enterprise ; that it is the ally of all the existing insincerities, the enemy of all the advancing truths.

You ask me, What is reverence ? If we must attempt a definition, it is not easy to improve upon the saying that it is "the sincere, the practical recognition of greatness." And, when speaking thus, let us take greatness in its widest sense. There is the greatness of institutions as well as the greatness of character ; greatness in the State as well as greatness in the Church ; greatness in humble as truly as in splendid circumstances ; greatness in the sphere of action as well as in that of thought. And each form of greatness, human or secular, not less than moral and religious, is entitled to its apportioned meed of reverence. The Highest Greatness, the Greatness from Which all other greatness proceeds, is entitled to the deepest reverence. If the recognition of such greatness is to be, not merely adequate, but sincere, it will take unwonted forms, and make exacting demands upon us.

Certainly, reverence is not the homage which weak minds pay to acceptable fictions. It would not be a virtue if it were. All virtue is based on truth. Reverence is the sense of truth put in practice. Just as humility consists in practically looking upon ourselves as we really are : so reverence consists in recognising the greatness of that which is truly great. Reverence is merely one form of sincerity ; it is sincerity face to face with greatness without us ; just as humility is sincerity face to face with sinfulness and demerit within us. Thus reverence is the recognition, not of a fiction, but of a fact : it is the product, not of an unhealthy sentiment, but of simple truthfulness. If an institution is seen to be not really good ;

if a character is obviously petty and warped ; if a doctrine or a theory is discovered to be false or unsound, there is no room for reverence. The soul may not lightly confer its certificate of greatness upon an unworthy recipient : it can only do so at the cost of that which is the common basis of all the virtues—the sense of truth. It may be misled : and reverence may be yielded to unworthy characters or at idol shrines which have no real claim on it : just as men of the highest logical ability may go on reasoning throughout life from false premises. But this accidental misfortune does not destroy the real place of reverence in the human soul. Reverence is essentially the instinct of truth, recognising a greatness which claims its homage.

Nor is reverence the foe of energy. We can only imitate with a good conscience that which we revere ; and reverence stimulates the energy of imitation. Accordingly, on this very account, reverence of a worthy object, the sincere recognition of real greatness, is not an excellence which may be dropped or taken up at pleasure. It is a necessary virtue, whether for a man or for a society. The man without reverence is the man who can see in God's universe no greatness which transcends himself. He passes by all the lofty characters, all the venerable institutions, all the great doctrines, all the finest creations of man's thought, or of man's enthusiasm, and he says in effect : 'There is that in me which is as great or greater than any of these : I shall not degrade myself by owning a higher greatness than my own.' As he passes through life, a shallow cynicism is ever playing upon his features : his motto is *nil admirari*. And do you suppose that his true greatness is secured or his energy roused by this indifference or insensibility ? Or is he really that, which, by refusing the tribute of reverence to any other, he practically takes himself to be ?

The question need not be answered. The irreverent man is his own worst enemy. We men are so constructed that we need an ideal to look up to, as truly as we need a power on which to depend. And if the Ideal be forgotten, and we are left to ourselves ; if we have nothing by which to measure our insignificance, nothing to rebuke our self-esteem, nothing to provoke and sustain our enthusiasm, nothing to admire, nothing to imitate, nothing to bow down before as utterly greater than ourselves ; then, depend upon it, our whole life must perforce shrink back into its own littleness. It must be left to its

narrow frontiers and its puny resources ; and our want of reverence for a greatness without us will be the exact measure of our incapacity for securing it within. The great have always been reverent ; and for the reason that they have looked up to and shared in a greatness higher than their own. But to aspire to greatness you must sincerely own it ; to recognise nothing as really great is to aim at nothing, to achieve nothing. Nothing, let me repeat it, is more fatal to a young man's prospects of true greatness in life, than that cynical estimate of everything and everybody which destroys all his moral enthusiasms and condemns him prematurely to a self-deceiving pettiness. And what is true of a man is true of a society. The class, the race, the nation which has no ideals to admire, no institutions to revere, is doomed to narrowness, vulgarity, ruin. A great many clever epigrams have been made about hero-worship ; and the worship of unworthy heroes is of course sufficiently ridiculous. But almost any hero-worship is better than none. The really pitiable thing is to revere nothing. Thoughtful Americans have said, that, amid all the material greatness of their country—and it is sufficiently astonishing—their gravest anxiety for her future is caused by the absence of reverence among all classes of her people ; the absence of any sincere recognition of a greatness which may ennoble its reverers.

## II.

Reverence, then, is by no means only or chiefly an ecclesiastical virtue ; it is necessary to the perfection of man as man, and to the wellbeing of society. But reverence is peculiarly a creation of religion. And if we ask why religion is thus the teacher, and the Church the school of reverence, the answer is, Because religion unveils before the soul of man a Greatness compared with Which all human greatness is insignificance itself. To the eye of religious faith, over every life, every character, every institution, every ideal, there is inscribed, "God alone is Great." All other greatness is a radiation from His, and insignificant when compared with His : His is all-embracing, self-subsisting, original. All other greatness is limited : His illimitable. All other greatness fails ultimately to satisfy : His never. If the Christian's eye rests reverently upon an excellence, whether of saint, or office, or institution, beneath His throne, it is not as on something satisfying or



final: it is as on an emanation from the Source of greatness "Every good gift and every perfect gift," however much it may win our admiration, is, we know, not self-originating, or due to human effort, but "from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."<sup>1</sup>

When reverence is in the immediate Presence of God, it takes a new form, or it adopts a new expression. It offers that which it offers to none other or less than God. It offers adoration. To admire a good man or a great institution, or a splendid deed, is the prompting of reverence. To admire God would be highly irreverent, since God, if we contemplate Him at all, demands much more than admiration. The least that reverence can do in the Presence of boundless Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, is to prostrate before Him every created faculty. For close contact with God produces on the soul of man, first of all, an impression of awe; and this impression is deep in exact proportion to the closeness of the contact.

When St. John says that he fell at the Feet of Jesus Christ "as dead," he plainly describes a collapse of all the faculties of the soul. Just as great heat or excessive cold destroys life, while moderate heat restores and moderate cold invigorates it, so it is in the spiritual world. Our spiritual capacities are finite, and they may easily be shocked or overdone. Thus it was said to Moses, "Thou canst not see My face and live."<sup>2</sup> Thus when Daniel, on the banks of the river Hiddekel, saw "a certain Man clothed in linen, Whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and His face as the appearance of lightning, and His eyes as lamps of fire, and His arms and His feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of His words like the voice of a multitude," he adds, "I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength."<sup>3</sup> So when the disciples heard the words from heaven at the Transfiguration, "they fell on their face, and were sore afraid."<sup>4</sup> So when at his conversion there shined round about Saul of Tarsus a light from heaven on the road to Damascus, "he fell to the earth."<sup>5</sup> It was thus in the present instance. St. John was overwhelmed at the sight of Jesus, Whom he had known so intimately and loved so well, revealed in His awful, unearthly glory. "I saw," he says,

<sup>1</sup> St. James i. 17.<sup>2</sup> Exod. xxxiii. 20.<sup>3</sup> Dan. x. 5-8.<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xvii. 6.<sup>5</sup> Acts ix. 4.

"seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and His hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and His eyes were as a flame of fire ; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars : and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword : and His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead." <sup>1</sup>

That the general aim and effect of religion is thus to create in the human soul, first of all, an awe of the Unseen and Almighty God, is everywhere witnessed by its preachers in the Bible. The Wise Man says that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." <sup>2</sup> A prophet cries : "The Lord is in His holy Temple ; let all the earth keep silence before Him." <sup>3</sup> An Apostle exhorts : "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear : for," he adds, "our God is a consuming fire." <sup>4</sup> An inspired historian says that the earliest Church at Jerusalem was multiplied, "walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." <sup>5</sup> The saints in heaven, who wonder and worship incessantly, cry, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord of Hosts ?" <sup>6</sup> And if on earth, amid all that we are permitted to see, we are conscious with the Apostle that, after all, we only "know in part," <sup>7</sup> even this partial knowledge may deepen reverence. What we know suggests the greatness of what we do not know. "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there and backward, but I cannot perceive Him : on the left hand where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him : He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him. Therefore am I troubled at His presence : when I consider, I am afraid of Him." <sup>8</sup>

When reverence for God is rooted in the soul, the soul sees God in all that reflects and represents Him on earth, and yields it for His sake appropriate recognition. The father, representing His parental authority : the mother, reflecting His tender love ; the powers that be in the State, ordained by God as His ministers ; <sup>9</sup> pastors of His Church, to whom He has said, "He that despiseth you despiseth Me ;" <sup>10</sup> great and good

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 12-17.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. i. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Hab. ii. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 28, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Acts ix. 31.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. xv. 4.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Job xxiii. 8, 9, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Rom. xiii. 4.

<sup>10</sup> St. Luke x. 16.

men, whether in past ages or our contemporaries, who shed upon the world around some of His light and love ; the Bible, which embodies for all time His revelation of Himself and His Will concerning us ; the laws of the natural world, when they are really ascertained, as being His modes of working ; the Sacraments, as channels of His grace, or veils of His Presence ; all that belongs to the public worship of Christ in His temples here on earth :—these are objects of Christian reverence because they are inseparable from Him, Who is the Only Great. And ever since He took upon Him our flesh and died, He has associated the poor, the suffering, the persecuted, the lonely, with His claims to honour. “Forasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”<sup>1</sup> And if there is any one part of Christian education which is really important it is this :—to take a child by the hand and lead it through the Church, and the world of nature, pointing out all that reflects God, and bidding it revere His greatness.

### III.

Let us make three observations in conclusion :—

1. Reverence is a test, a measure of faith. We do not see God with our bodily eyes : faith is a second sight which does see Him. If men see God, they will behave accordingly. We know how differently we speak of people in their presence, and when we imagine them to be quite out of the way. I do not say that this is right ; but is it not almost universal ? And if a man believes that God is really close to him ; seeing what he is doing, hearing what he is saying, noting what he is thinking, he will surely act, speak, think, accordingly with this belief. That this is really the case is one of the very first lessons of faith. And if men are irreverent, the common-sense explanation is that they do not really believe in the omnipresence of God.

Apply this to behaviour in a church. Behaviour in church is not by any means the only province or exercise of reverence ; far from it. But it is a very important one ; and it is a very good test of our reverence in respect of other matters. If God is not really with us in public worship ; if the promise, “Where two or three are gathered in My Name, there am I in

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxv. 40.

the midst of them,"<sup>1</sup> does not represent a literal fact ; no more senseless waste of time than the expenditure of time in Church services can well be conceived. But if He is with us ; if His Presence explains and justifies all that is said and sung ; must it not follow that whatever expresses our feeling of lowly awe at the nearness of the Most Holy, before Whom His angels veil their faces, is but the common sense of the occasion ? There are, I know, some persons who maintain that real reverence,—reverence of the soul,—has nothing to do with a man's behaviour in church : that he may lounge in his seat, fold his arms, behave himself as he would not think of behaving in any lady's drawing-room, neglect the prayers, neglect the responses, sit when others kneel, look about him, devote himself to discovering who is there, while the most passionate entreaties for mercy, or the deepest expressions of awe, or the tenderest protestations of love, are rising up in Psalm or Litany towards the throne of Christ ; since all the while he may conceivably be engaged in a profoundly spiritual communion with God, which is loftily independent of the mere circumstances of attitude and attention. Brethren, I do not believe it. As a rule, if a man does not pray when others pray in church, he does not pray at all. As a rule, if a man's bodily posture is irreverent, his thoughts and feelings are irreverent too. The reason is, because the soul and body are so intimately linked to each other that the body cannot be for long in postures which are hostile to the movements of the soul. Certain postures—it is a matter of experience upon which artists and moralists are alike agreed—do correspond to certain passions, emotions, states of mind. And to keep the body by force in a posture violently opposed to a given condition of mind is to modify this condition considerably, or even to suppress it altogether. No one could for long lounge back in an easy-chair if moved by a sense of burning indignation : no one with tender affection in his heart could long maintain an expression of countenance which implied that he was entirely out of temper. He would be conscious that the contrast was ridiculous. In the same way, if a man sees God, he will behave as it is natural to behave in the Presence of the Almighty. He will be too absorbed to look about at his fellow-worshippers : too much alive to the greatness and awfulness of God to care what others think about himself : he will yield to those instinctive expressions of reverence which the Creator has

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xviii. 20.

implanted in us by nature and refined and heightened by grace : and he will find that the reverence of the soul is best secured when the body, its companion and instrument, is reverent also. If a man feels reverent, he will kneel when others kneel. This does not apply to the sick, or the aged ; but there can be no doubt about the duty of the young and the hale. To see God is to feel it to be an imperious necessity to prostrate ourselves before Him. "O come, let us worship and fall down,"<sup>1</sup> and kneel before the Lord our Maker,"<sup>2</sup> is the voice of true reverence for all time.

2. Reverence begins from within. It cannot be learned as a code of outward conduct. I do not mean to say that a man may not learn up phrases, postures, proprieties of speech and proprieties of action which look like reverence, and which belong, generally speaking, to its external outfit. But if his reverence goes no deeper than this he will not deceive others, or, for any long time, even himself. He will be taken un-awares and when off his guard, and then his natural irreverence will show itself. It is with reverence towards God and all that belongs to Him, as it is with good manners towards our fellow-creatures. The only true spring of good manners is genuine consideration for others and forgetfulness of self. Many selfish people learn up a certain amount of good manners, which they practise in public and on social occasions. But sooner or later they astonish the world by saying or doing something outrageously pompous or rude. The reason is that they have never had the true principle of good manners within them, and their attempts to keep up appearances could not be expected to succeed always or beyond a certain time. To act and speak reverently, a man must feel reverently : and if he is to feel reverently, he must see our Lord. If our Lord is merely a phrase to him, or, as we say, an abstraction, an idea, and not a real being ; his outward reverence is worthless, and it will not last. If he feels what it is to be in God's Presence, to speak to Him, to ask Him to do this or that, to promise Him to attempt this or that ; if he has any idea of the meaning of

<sup>1</sup> וְשָׁתַחֲוֶה וְיִכְרָעָה. Maurer *in loc.*, "prosternamus nos et incurvemus nos." "How impossible," said Dr. Pusey one day to a well-meaning but uninformed lady, who was objecting to reverence in church as "unscriptural formalism,"—"how impossible it would be for you to say what you do, if you knew the real meaning of the word translated 'worship' in the 95th Psalm!"

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xcv. 6.



these solemn acts of the soul, the outward proprieties will follow. It was when St. John saw Christ that he fell, as by an irresistible instinct, at His Feet as dead.

3. Lastly, reverence, the deepest, the truest, is perfectly compatible with love. There are many Christians who do not understand this. Their hearts are, I doubt not, full of love to our Lord and Saviour for His gracious work of Redemption : they rejoice in Him as in their dearest Friend, Who has first washed them in His Blood, and then admitted them to His intimacy, and bade them make themselves at home in His Presence. And they think, if they are to speak their minds, that to fall down before Him in His awful glory is to forfeit the liberty with which He has made them free ; to go back from the Gospel to the Law ; from the kingdom of love to the kingdom of fear. They think that if they cannot behave as if they were on free and easy terms with Him ; if they cannot speak of Him and speak to Him in a familiar way, and just as it comes into their heads ; if they cannot talk of His work, His providences, as if He were an active neighbour in an adjoining street, and there was no room for mystery, and they knew all about Him ; if they cannot describe themselves as on a footing of such assured intimacy with Him as to exclude all anxiety, and enable them to forecast everything with peremptory confidence, there is no real love between them and Him, no warmth in their religion worth speaking of.

Brethren, do you not see that they make the mistake observable in people who are often to be met with in the world, and who cannot understand how friendship can be sincere if it does not involve familiarity, or how love is genuine which does not permit others to take liberties ? In sober earnest, reverence is the salt which preserves the purity of affection, without impairing its intensity. We are so framed that we can only love for long that which we heartily respect. The passion which is lavished for a few hours upon an object which does not deserve respect is unworthy of the sacred name of love. And God, when He asks the best love of our hearts, would preserve it from corruption by requiring also the safeguard of reverence. He will have us remember that He does not cease to be awful because He is unspeakably tender and condescending. Nay ; He teaches us awe of Him first : love for Him afterwards. When Daniel was prostrate at the vision, " Behold," he says, " an hand touched me, which set me upon



my knees and upon the palms of my hands. . . . Then said He unto me, Fear not, Daniel : for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, . . . thy words were heard.”<sup>1</sup> When the Apostles had sunk to the earth in terror at the voice at the Transfiguration, Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Arise, be not afraid.”<sup>2</sup> St. John had fallen at our Lord’s Feet as dead. But “He laid His right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the First and the Last : I am He that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.”<sup>3</sup>

So, brethren, it is always in the kingdom of souls, now and to the end of time. We begin with awe, we end with love ; and reverence links our earlier spiritual education with our later and higher privileges. Unless the disciple whom Jesus loved, and to whom He gave the greatest pledge of personal affection, is no model for us ; unless we can suppose that those high intelligences, who veil their faces and bend in incessant adoration before the throne of the Most Holy, do not really love the Divine Object of their worship as strongly and purely as do the sons of men ; it is certain that the purest love goes ever hand in hand with the deepest reverence, and that in another sphere of being the one grace will be seen to be nothing less than necessary to the very existence of the other.

<sup>1</sup> Dan. x. 10, 12.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xvii. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. i. 17, 18

## SERMON XXIX.

### ENDURANCE OF WRONG

I ST. PETER II. 19.

*This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*

THE Epistle for to-day,<sup>1</sup> it has been suggested, would have been better suited for one of the Sundays before Easter, if not for Good Friday itself. The subject of this Epistle is patience under undeserved wrong, as illustrated by the example of our Suffering and Sinless Lord. Such a subject does seem, at first sight, out of keeping with the thoughts and joys of the Easter season. But the truth is, in those early days when, with a few exceptions, our present Epistles and Gospels were selected, the Death and Resurrection of Christ were looked upon, as indeed they are treated in Scripture, as events inseparably connected with each other. They are two aspects of a single whole; the self-sacrifice and triumph of the Divine Love manifested towards ruined man are one in purpose from first to last. And thus it is that, even when Easter has come and gone, the lesser lessons of Good Friday are heard echoing down the weeks which follow the great festival. It seems as though the Church felt that she could not learn at the time all that the Passion of her Lord was meant to teach her: so she returns to the scene of His sorrow, to gather up what had escaped her amid the distractions and bewilderment of the day of His Death. Certainly this applies to to-day's services. The Collect speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Sacrifice for sin; in the Gospel He is the Good Shepherd Who lays down His Life for His sheep: in the Epistle He is the Great Sufferer,

<sup>1</sup> Second Sunday after Easter.

patient and faultless, Who by His sublime endurance teaches patience and resignation to those who suffer wrongfully throughout all time.

## I.

If we look at the context of this passage, we observe, first of all, that St. Peter is not writing, as the extract selected for the Epistle might suggest, to Christians in general. He is addressing one class of Christians, namely, household slaves. "Slaves," he begins, "be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For," he adds, "this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."<sup>1</sup> Our translation, "servants," was perhaps intended to make the passage practically useful, by suggesting its application to that class among ourselves who so far resemble the ancient slaves, that they have duties to perform in obedience to a human master. But in truth the word "servants," with all its modern associations, misleads us seriously as to the Apostle's meaning. A servant in an English household has very little in common with a slave in that old-world society for which St. Peter wrote. A servant is a free man or woman, who undertakes to do a certain kind and amount of work, in return for a certain stipend. This undertaking is a contract. It may be brought to an end, by giving due notice, at any moment. It involves, while it lasts, no forfeiture of the protection which the law extends equally to servant and master. Long before an English servant "suffered wrongfully," in the sense contemplated by St. Peter, the law would step in, and punish any personal assault or cruelty, or withholding of covenanted salary, with impartial justice.

Far otherwise was it with the ancient slave. He had no rights before the law. He was looked upon, so a great writer of antiquity puts it, as "an animated piece of property." He was bought, just like the cattle in the homestead, or the furniture about the room; if indeed he was not born and bred on the estate. He was often taught a profession that he might be useful to his master, or might fetch a high price if sent to a sale. He was a cook, a poet, a jeweller, a cabinet-maker, an architect, a physician, a mechanic, a private attendant, a hair-dresser, a field-labourer, an epigrammatist;—just as the case

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 18, 19.

might be. He was lent out to a friend, or sold for a song, or flogged to death, or crucified, or made a pet of,—just as the caprice of his owner might dictate. He, too, had his attachments, like the rest of us. But he might be willed away, from the associations of a lifetime, to a strange owner and a distant home, without a suspicion of his destiny; or he might, quite in his old age, pass at the death of a kind and considerate master to some young heir, selfish and reckless, who viewed him simply as worn-out property, and treated him with indifference or cruelty. Worst of all was his precarious hold on those sacred rights which marriage carries with it. If he was married, his wife and his children were his, only on sufferance; and his family might be broken up, at a moment's notice, to fill the purse or to gratify the passions of the thoughtless owner. And all this while the slave was, not unfrequently, in everything but civil position, his master's superior; a man of wider cultivation, of larger capacities, of finer moral make, of nobler sympathies. He might be an Epictetus; he might have those rarer gifts and graces which are wont to win the homage of the best among mankind. It mattered not. He had no rights before the law: no redress against brutal wrong: no claim which would be recognised by public opinion as entitling him to consideration and justice. Not seldom his very superiority was his ruin: it moved the jealousy or it stimulated the caprice of his owner to some exceptional act of cruelty or oppression.

Certainly, now and then, the natural conscience of pagan rulers moved them to do something—it was little enough—to improve the condition of the slaves. At one time the old pagan Roman law restrained the right of the master to kill a slave without some assignable cause; at another it obliged him to get an authorisation from a magistrate; at a later period, when Christianity had now made itself felt, the law only permitted him to inflict bodily punishment short of death. In the same way, custom allowed the slave to have a little property; legally, of course, a man who was himself property could not hold property. In this way a slave would sometimes hoard enough to buy his freedom. But all this came to very little: the cruelty and degradation attendant on slavery was gigantic. And from time to time there were wild attempts at resistance; when tens of thousands of armed slaves sought freedom from their oppressors in death on the field of battle, or in victory. In the age of the Apostles no social question was more

pressing throughout the Roman Empire than this question of slavery.

When, then, the Apostles addressed themselves to the conversion of the world, they found at once that they had this matter on their hands. Christianity was especially the religion of the suffering and the ill-used; and the slaves welcomed it as a heaven-sent friend. As St. Peter thinks over the Jewish converts to Christ "throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, and Bithynia,"<sup>1</sup> he remembers that multitudes of them were slaves: Christian slaves in pagan households. They have, he reflects, a great claim upon his charity. What should help them to bear the hardships of their lot, if the Faith and Church of Jesus did not help them? The Apostle scans them over; smarting, as they were, under a sense of accumulated wrong; crushed down, as they were, beneath an iron system, which looked, no doubt, to themselves and to their masters, as secure as anything human can be. What can he say to them that will lighten their dreary prison-house? How can he suggest the consecration of unmerited sorrow by the Divine Sufferer, and the hope of a brighter life hereafter? "This is thankworthy," he says, "if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

## II.

St. Peter teaches that suffering is thankworthy; that it is a gift from God, and in turn acceptable to Him, if it be accompanied by two conditions.

1. It must be undeserved. A slave, too, might be punished for doing what would merit punishment in a free man. A slave, too, might be violent, or abusive, or careless about that which belonged to others, or intemperate, or dishonest, or treacherous. If punished for offences of this kind, he might not complain. "What glory is it," asks St. Peter, "if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently?"<sup>2</sup> The rule that punishment follows wrong-doing is not suspended in the case of a slave.

2. Such suffering must also be "for conscience toward God." It must be borne for His cause and sake, and with a good hope of His approval. This it is which makes pain at

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. i. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ii. 20.

once bearable and bracing, when the conscience of the sufferer can ask the Perfect Moral Being to take note of it, just as David does in so many of the Psalms. "Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me : Lord, be Thou my Helper."<sup>1</sup> Mere suffering, which a man dares not offer to God, though it be borne patiently, through natural pluck or courage, has no spiritual value. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit ;"<sup>2</sup> this is the consecration prayer of sorrow. It was uttered on the Cross. It is uttered, if in other terms, wherever men suffer for conscience toward God. And by it suffering is already changed into moral victory.

In short, St. Peter says to the Christian slaves : ' If you like, you can turn the hardest circumstances of your lot into very choice blessings. Suffering is not necessarily an evil ; it may be a signal good. If it is undeserved, so much the better for its religious efficacy : it then is a certificate of honour sent you from God. Let it be accepted as from Him and for His sake, and it at once becomes a great grace ; a token of near likeness to our Lord Jesus Christ.'

St. Paul deals with this question in a similar spirit. He bids the slaves at Ephesus be obedient to their masters, not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the slaves of Christ :<sup>3</sup> and he uses almost the same terms in addressing the slaves at Colosse.<sup>4</sup> He desires Titus, as a Bishop in Crete, to exhort slaves "to be obedient to their own masters, and to please them well in all things : not answering again, not purloining, but showing all good fidelity ; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."<sup>5</sup> Writing to Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, he desires generally that slaves should count their masters worthy of all honour ; and in particular, that slaves belonging to Christian masters are not to think the worse of them because they are brethren who yet keep slaves, but rather do them service because they are Christian believers and objects of God's love.<sup>6</sup> He advises Christian slaves at Corinth, even if they can be free, not to care to use their opportunity.<sup>7</sup> Everywhere the advice given is substantially this ; ' Submit

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxx. 11.<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 46.<sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 5, 6.<sup>4</sup> Col. iii. 22-24.<sup>5</sup> Titus ii. 9, 10.<sup>6</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 1, 2.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 21. Cf. Meyer *in loc.*, who supplies an object to *χρησται* thus:—"nämlich als Schlave berufen worden zu sein." The *καί* and thrice-repeated *ἐκάρτος μενέτω* seem to make this interpretation certain. In the judgment of the Apostle, the Future Life was too near at hand and too unspeakably important to make it worth a man's while to trouble himself greatly about his condition in this.



and obey cheerfully; endure patiently; remember that time is short; remember that the accidents of our outward condition here matter little as compared with our state in the unending future.'

### III.

Here it may be asked, Why did not the Apostles denounce slavery as an intolerable wrong? Why did they thus trifle with it, and allow the Church which succeeded them to trifle with it? Why did they seem, indirectly at least, to sanction it, by advising slaves to honour and obey their owners? Was not this of the nature of a compromise between good and evil; between the high principles of Christian morals on the one hand, and the debased institutions of heathen life on the other? Would it not have been better to break with slavery at once and altogether; better for the honour of the Christian Revelation; better for the best interests of man?

Certainly, my brethren, nothing can well be more anti-pathetic than the spirit of the Gospel and the spirit of slavery. For slavery postulates an essential distinction between man and man, which is unknown to the Gospel. The Gospel proclaims the unity of the human race, and the equality of all its members before God: the Gospel is based upon and consecrates the laws of God in nature. And slavery is distinctly unnatural; it is a rejection of the fundamental equality of men; it often and consistently professes to reject belief in the unity of the race. In the mind of a slave-owner the deepest of all distinctions between human beings, is that between the man who is his own owner and the man who is owned by another. In Christ Jesus, exclaims the Apostle, "there is neither bond nor free."<sup>1</sup>

But the exact question which the Apostles had to consider was whether slavery necessarily ruined the prospects of the human soul. It was not whether slavery was a bad social institution, or theoretically indefensible. The business of the Apostles lay with the other world, rather than with this; with this world so far as it bears upon the other. What a man's condition might be in this world mattered little in an Apostle's judgment, if he could secure the true end of his being in the world to come. And that a slave could do this was not a matter that admitted of doubt. A slave might be a Christian,

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iii. 28.

the best of Christians, easily enough. If he was harshly treated, that was not peculiar to his condition of life : while it might promote his sanctification. If a man is tempted to do wrong, St. James tells him that he should count this all joy, knowing that the trial of his faith worketh endurance.<sup>1</sup> If a slave had to choose between sinful compliance with a master's will and the punishment of death, he would know his part, if his eye was fixed on the Divine Sufferer. The grace of God may make the soul of man independent of outward circumstances ; there is no real slavery when the soul is free. And it often happened that a Christian slave would live more entirely in and for a better world than other Christians, because there was so little to win the homage of his heart in this. To the slave-owner, undoubtedly, slavery was more fraught with spiritual danger than to the slave himself ; but, however great the temptations of the position, they were, after all, only temptations. Even a master of slaves might be just, generous, chaste, charitable, humble, tender-hearted, true, unselfish ; although, beyond doubt, circumstances were against him.

Slavery, then, in Christian eyes, although undoubtedly bad, is not bad in the sense in which murder and adultery are bad ; as an enemy with which a Christian can in any circumstances keep no terms. It may tend to multiply temptations, but it cannot compel to actual sin ; since sin is only possible when the will consents. At the same time, although the Apostles were working for another world ; in the course of doing so, and incidentally, they were destined to be the reformers of this. They could not but dislike slavery ; but how was it to be done away with ? Was it to be by a sudden revolutionary effort ; supposing the thing to be possible ? Or was it to be by the influence of new principles, first upon the opinions, and then upon the structure, of society ? The Apostles chose the latter method ; but it was a method which took time. The Apostles trusted to the silent operation of the law of Christian love, and not to those violent and tragical catastrophes which, even when they succeed, succeed amidst a scene of sin and ruin. It was not the duty of the Gospel to proclaim a social war. There were sects at that time nearly related to Judaism, the Essenes and Therapeutæ, whose teaching was certainly familiar to St. Paul. They held that the slave should at once refuse all obedience to his master in the name of human rights.

<sup>1</sup> St. James i. 3.

But Spartacus with his thousands of slaves, maddened by oppression into rebellion against society, would never have put an end to slavery. The better way was to teach a higher ideal of life, both to the slave and the master, and meanwhile to proclaim : "This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."

From the first slavery was so changed, when in Christian hands, as to lose most of its worst features. Christian slave-masters at Ephesus are reminded by St. Paul that they have a "Master also in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with Him."<sup>1</sup> The Church was incessantly, after the Apostolic pattern, pleading with some Philemon for kindness towards an Onesimus.<sup>2</sup> Already, in her eyes, the slave of the civil law was Christ's freeman.<sup>3</sup> In a Christian household the marriage between slaves was respected, as being what Christ's law had made it—sacred and indissoluble.<sup>4</sup> In Christian households a hundred courtesies softened the hardship of the relation between master and slave ; the sense of a common brotherhood in Christ had already sapped the idea of any radical inequality between them. Did they not both owe existence to the same Creative Will ? Were they not both redeemed by the same Atoning Blood ? Had not both been washed in the Sacrament of Regeneration ? Did they not kneel side by side to receive the Body of the Lord ? Were they not alike striving day by day to deepen faith, hope, charity in their souls ? Did they not look forward to a common home in heaven ? Thus it happened that Christian slaves occasionally rose even to high places in the ministry of the Church. Callistus, Bishop of Rome at the beginning of the third century, was a slave. Sometimes slaves were martyrs for Christ. Blandina of Lyons, who died for Christ in the year 177, was a Christian slave. And martyrdom, the highest act of moral freedom of which man is capable, more than wiped out the degradation of slavery ; within the Church martyrdom was the patent of nobility. Then came the legislation of the Christian Councils ; and the Codes of the Christian Emperors.

It is welcome to-day<sup>5</sup> to remember how, in this great field of human improvement, religion and law went for centuries hand in hand ; religion seeking ever and anon the assistance of law ; law, in such codes as those of Theodosius and Justinian, drawing its best inspirations from the guidance of religion ;

<sup>1</sup> Eph. vi. 9.    <sup>2</sup> Philem. 8-10, 17.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 22.    <sup>4</sup> St. Matt. xix. 6.

<sup>5</sup> This Sermon was preached before the Lord Mayor and the Judges.

until at last slavery died utterly away within the precincts of civilisation, although, alas ! it has lingered on elsewhere even to our own days, as the disgrace of selfish commercial enterprise pursued at the expense of the feeblér races of mankind.

#### IV.

But it may be asked, whether the advice of St. Peter to submit quietly to wrong does not destroy manliness and force of character, if it is acted on ? Does it not tend to create a race of effeminate, spiritless men, who may give little trouble to a bad institution or a bad government, but who have parted with all that can be called "moral strength" ?

This question involves another. In what does moral strength consist ? It is sometimes taken for granted that moral strength must catch the eye, must strike upon the ear, must inflict itself on the imagination ; that it must be something bustling, pushing, demonstrative, aggressive ; that it must at least have colour, body, muscle, to recommend it. No, brethren, this is not the case. Moral strength, in its very finest forms, may be the reverse of all this : when it makes no show, and is passive, it is often at its best. Many a man who can act with great courage in moments of great personal danger, in a struggle with a brigand, or in a burning house, cannot go through an illness as bravely and patiently as a little girl. The courage which was shown by the men who, after seeing the safety of the women and children on board, went down in the *Birkenhead*, may have been greater than that of the men who charged at Balaclava. Animal effort, or the excitement of a great crisis, makes courage easy. The hardest thing often is to do nothing ; to await the approach of danger or of death, and yet not to lose nerve and self-possession.

No moral strength in the whole history of mankind ever equalled that which was displayed on Calvary ; where all that awaited Him was present from the first to the Mind of the Divine Victim, "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing that has been said will be so greatly misconstrued as to be taken to imply that cruelty, tyranny, oppression, can be agreeable to the Mind of God. He permits these things

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 23.

among men, from time to time, just as He permits much else that is evil, for His Own wise ends. He brings good out of them; yet He condemns them. By and by He will punish them. Who can read the Jewish Prophets, and not mark how, one after another, they maintain the cause of the helpless, whether against bad Jewish kings, or against heathen conquerors? Who can use the Psalter, especially the Psalms of David himself, without sharing the fire of his moral indignation against oppression and wrong? If St. Peter advises oppressed slaves to "endure grief, suffering wrongfully," for "conscience toward God," because "this is acceptable with God," he does not therefore sanction the caprice or cruelty of the master. Nowhere does the New Testament approve of selfish indifference to wrong inflicted upon others on the part of a bystander: if it is a duty to submit to violence, it is equally a duty to rescue those who suffer, as opportunity may suggest. Nowhere has the Gospel repealed the stern sentence which Prophet and Psalmist alike utter against public or private tyrants: "Why boastest thou thyself, thou tyrant, that thou canst do mischief; whereas the goodness of God endureth yet daily? . . . Therefore shall God destroy thee for ever: He shall take thee, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling, and root thee out of the land of the living."<sup>1</sup> Nowhere is it implied in the Bible that the systems involving the oppression of man by man have vested rights in the moral universe, or that the circumstances which permit it are even tolerable, unless they are perpetuated for very different purposes indeed. The days will come when Englishmen will look back to the Abolition of the Slave Trade by the English Parliament as a greater title to glory than was Trafalgar or Waterloo; as among the very greatest in the course of our history. Wilberforce and Clarkson will rank even before those celebrated commanders, to whose courage and genius, under God, we owe the independence of our country. Great days they were when English gentlemen endured every species of unpopularity and insult in pursuit of one noble and disinterested object; when England, not without long debate and hesitation, but at length deliberately, sacrificed her material interests to the amount of thirty millions sterling, that she might secure freedom and well-being to the enslaved races of Africa. Have there been no symptoms of late that some sections of English society have lost something of this generous impatience of cruel wrong; have learned to listen to the cry

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lii. 1, 2, 6.



of anguish raised by millions of our fellow-creatures, and to listen, if not unmoved, yet without making an effort to help them?

Be this as it may, the truth announced by St. Peter is always widely applicable in every age and country. Among yourselves there are probably some who, for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. There are no slaves, thank God, on English soil, but there are multitudes of persons in positions of dependence whose lives can easily be made miserable by the cruel ingenuity of their betters, and too often for no worse crime than that of obeying a higher sense of right. Every rank in society has its petty tyrants and its secret confessorships; to suffer wrongfully for conscience toward God is the monopoly of no one class. Here is a cadet of a noble family who will not consent to a transaction which he knows to be unjust; and he is cut off with a shilling. There is an apprentice or clerk in a large city house who will not abandon the duties or restraints of a Christian life, in deference to pressure, or abuse, or ridicule from his companions; and he has a hard time of it. Yonder is a governess who has learnt a higher estimate of life and duty than her wealthy and ostentatious employer; or a clergyman, who feels too keenly the real character of Divine Revelation, and the tremendous issues of life and death, to acquiesce in some popular but shallow misrepresentation of the Gospel, which makes his people comfortable, without bringing them nearer to God. These, and such as these, must, "for conscience toward God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully." Law can do but little for them; the province of law lies outside the spheres of the heart and the conscience; the whole world of motive is beyond it. But religion can do much, or rather everything, by pointing to the Crucified and Risen Prince of that vast company in all ages, who have cared less to avoid discomfort than to be true to known truth and duty; by pointing to the unapproached bitterness of His sorrow and to the completeness and splendour of His triumph.



## SERMON XXX.

### CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

I ST. PETER II. 21.

*Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.*

THERE is a purpose in the order of the words of the opening sentence of the Collect for to-day :<sup>1</sup> "Almighty God, Who hast given Thine only Son to be unto us both a Sacrifice for sin, and also an Ensamples of godly life." The first reason for the gift of the Incarnate Son to a perishing world, is that He might be a Sacrifice for its sin. The second reason is, that He might be an Ensamples of godly life to those who believe in Him. We sinners cannot invert the order, and say that He was given, first as our Example, and secondly as our Sin-offering before God. For we cannot imitate Him until He has redeemed us from the power and guilt of sin ; the first need of a sinner is pardon and moral freedom, the second, the Ideal of a new life.

Surely it is not without an object that our Lord's example is thus put forward by the Church so soon after Easter. The great anniversary of His Atoning Death and glorious Resurrection fills men's thoughts and hearts with gratitude for one result of His coming among us ; it does this so exclusively, as, for the time being, to put others out of sight. With our hearts thus full of what He has done for us, we may forget too easily what He expects us to do : and the Church, here, as always, practical, does not allow us to forget it. "And also an Ensamples of godly life." She does not for a moment deny that the supreme significance of Christ's coming is His sacrificial Death ; but she urges that He is also an Example, and that we may not safely lose sight of it.

<sup>1</sup> Second Sunday after Easter.

That there is from time to time a danger of doing this, a glance at our own religious history will show. When a great revival of religion took place at the end of the last and at the beginning of the present century, the point on which it mainly insisted, was the value of our Lord's Atoning Death. In the cold and dreary eighteenth century, Christianity had been well-nigh resolved into a republication of natural morality ; a means of promoting a very moderate standard of good conduct, by appeals to the emotions and the imagination. Against this poor and soulless substitute for the religion of the Crucified a protest was raised, which, so far and so long as it was earnest and positive, achieved a great work for God. Such, however, is the finiteness of our minds, that a vivid apprehension of one truth too often blinds us to others ; and, in the fervour with which Christ's Atoning Death was preached, His example, to say nothing of other aspects of His mediatorial work, was too largely lost sight of. It was even said, at the time to which I refer, that to insist on Christ's example was not to preach the Gospel ; that it was legal and unevangelical ; although, as you know, the four Evangelists are almost entirely devoted to setting it forth. Something of the same kind may at times be also observed in that deeper, and, strictly speaking, more Evangelical movement which has succeeded the so-termed Evangelicalism. To the rallying-cry of the earlier revival, "Pardon through Christ," this later movement adds, with St. Paul, "Union with Christ." Men had strangely overlooked the vital truth, so constantly insisted on by the great Apostle, especially in such epistles as that to the Ephesians—that Christians in a state of grace are one with Jesus Christ ; that He is throned in all living souls as an inward Presence, as the guarantee of their future glory. Some of us may remember how, when once we had caught sight of this, we read the New Testament with new eyes. Of this union with Christ the Christian Sacraments are the appointed instruments. Only thus have they any rightful place in a religion, whence mere shadows of absent or future blessings have departed, and where all is real. Yet here, too, there has been at times a danger of overlooking our Lord's example. Christ in the soul has seemed so precious, that, like Christ on the Cross, He has been remembered, while men have forgotten the Ensam- ple of godly life in the Gospels. Against this one-sidedness the Church, like the New Testament, is ever on guard. They both remind us that Christ is not only our Righteousness and

Sanctification,<sup>1</sup> but also our Model;<sup>2</sup> that He is the perfect Man, to the measure of Whose stature<sup>3</sup> redeemed souls should constantly strive to attain; that He has left us, not merely pardon for the past, and grace and strength for the future, but also an external standard of conduct; that He has left us an Ensamples that we should follow His steps.

## I.

Here a question which has to be considered is,—why we need such an Example at all.

Let us ask ourselves what it is which makes human nature radically different from that of any of the creatures that surround us. The great characteristic of man is the possession of free will. Man's will may control, not merely external circumstances to a considerable extent, but man's self,—his character. It is true of every man, within very large limits, that he is what he makes himself to be. This is not true of the creatures beneath us. They are what they grow to be. A tree is tall or stunted, it is leafy or bare of leaves, in accordance with the law of its growth: the soil, the situation, the climate foster, or check its vital force, as the case may be. But it has no control over its destiny; it becomes what it is without reference to any standard external to it or to any deliberate efforts of its own. And an animal too grows to be what it is in obedience to the law of its species; its growth is retarded or aided by climate, food, rest, and exercise; and it instinctively makes the most of these. Instinct, indeed, leads the young to copy the parent: but this imitation is not reasoned; it is not a matter of choice; it is determined by something which could not but determine it; by unreflecting impulse. The case is otherwise with man. The growth of the human body indeed is as little within man's control as is that of an animal: as our Lord reminds us, "Thou canst not make one hair white or black."<sup>4</sup> But human character, and so much of the bodily life as bears on character, is as much under our control as are the canvas and the colours under that of a painter. Our passions, our inclinations, our thoughts, our sympathies, our antipathies, our habits, are at the disposal of our wills; we are what we have gradually made ourselves. Many influences have co-operated, have been appropriated, or have been overcome in the process. It is a long and chequered

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. i. 30.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xi. 1.<sup>3</sup> Eph. iv. 13.<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. v. 36.

history with many of us, and One Eye only surveys it from first to last in its completeness. But, whatever the elements of thought or of feeling, internal or from without, of nature or of supernatural grace, that have contributed towards it ; we are, each of us, in the last resort, what, using the gifts which God has given us, we have made ourselves to be.

Man, then, is an artist. And as an artist he needs not merely the material out of which to mould some expression of thought, but an example, an ideal, to copy. He cannot leave that vast assortment of moral material, which he is himself, to develop itself by hazard. He must mould and shape it in accordance with some pattern external to himself. He will sink, with fatal certainty, if he does not sustain himself by looking beyond himself ; if he thinks to grow, as a tree grows, by the free self-assertion of some internal impulse, unchecked by any outward model or rule. The need of an ideal is felt by man in all ages, and everywhere. What school is there in which there are not one or two boys, to whom, for their character or their accomplishments, the rest, by unexpressed consent, look up ? What profession, or department of human activity, in which there are not some typical men, whose skill or success has made them models to be imitated, though at a distance, by their fellows ? What nation, which does not recognise in some one of its sons, living or dead, an ideal representation of its best temper ; so that, as the successive generations pass, they look up and say, Let us copy him ! Indeed, the greatest misfortune that can happen to a nation, or a society, or a man, is to be without an ideal, or, as the proverb goes, to admire nothing. That undisturbed satisfaction with what is, is more fatal than a dozen misplaced enthusiasms ; it is the certain presage of degradation. Man can only escape imprisonment within whatever is lowest in his nature, by perseveringly looking beyond himself to a Model of ideal excellence, and striving to attain it.

It may indeed be asked whether it will not do as well to obey a precept as to copy an example. Example, it is said, is vague ; Precept is explicit. Precept is active ; it seeks you out and addresses you. Example is passive ; it lets you imitate if you will. Example merely says, ' This may be done because it has been done.' Precept says, ' Do it.'

No, brethren, you especially who, as parents or masters, are responsible for influence on others ; assuredly, no. Example goes further than Precept. Precept is a challenge : it rouses

in our fallen nature those elements of resistance, which start into life at the approach of authority in any guise. Example is an invitation : it gently stimulates our sense of emulation ; it encourages our hopes ; it allays our apprehensions. Precept leads us to the foot of a precipitous mountain, and it cries, 'Scale that height.' But Example whispers : 'Mark what I do, and then do it ; it cannot be hard for you since it is easy for me. See how I place this foot here ; now copy me : and that just there ; and this hand on that ledge of rock. Look how I step over that crevice, and rest on this projecting foothold, and tread lightly and quickly along that insecure bit of the path. Watch me ; keep close to me. You see how easy it is : all that is needed is a cool head and close attention to what I am doing. Then all will be well in the end.'

This is the silent language of Example : and it is, I say, much more persuasive than the spoken language of Precept. It is Precept made easy ; Precept, and something more human and sympathetic than Precept ; it is Precept and Obedience all in one. And it is proportionally persuasive.

## II.

We do then need an example, and our Lord has satisfied this need of our nature, and completely. In Him we have before us an Example which is unique. He passed through life in the humblest circumstances : yet He belongs to the human race. Until He was thirty years of age, He was a working carpenter. His associates were the very poor. He was not noticed by any persons of wealth or influence ; He spoke the language of the Galilean peasantry. As the Jews said of Him, He "never learned letters ;"<sup>1</sup> He certainly never wrote a book. Literature, society, the great traditions of learning, of thought, of administration, which do so much for most of those who sway the world, did nothing for Him. Yet He is a world-wide Example. He belongs to no sect, such as the Pharisees or Sadducees ; to no country, for although He is born of a Jewish mother, all races may claim Him as their own ; to no historical epoch, for He had no visible part in the great events of His day, and does not bear their impress. He alone in the world is the Universal Man ; He is the one Man Who corresponds to that ideal of humanity of which there are traces in the minds of all of us ; He is the great Example.

<sup>1</sup> St. John vii. 15.



1. That which strikes us, first of all, in the example which He has left us, is its faultlessness. We are startled by His Own sense of this. He never utters one word to the Father or to man which implies the consciousness of a defect. Read the lives of the great servants of God in the Old or New Testament. Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, St. Peter, St. Paul : they all confess sin. They humble themselves before men, they implore the mercy of God. Think of any good man whom you have ever known, or whose life you have studied. He has feared God, loved God, worked for God during long years. Yet he is full of a sense of inconsistency and imperfection pervading life and conduct ; he is profuse in his acknowledgments of weakness and of sin. Nay ; if he were not thus eager to confess sin, we should question his goodness. His self-depreciation is, we instinctively feel, only honesty. But Jesus Christ reproaches Himself for nothing, confesses nothing, regrets nothing. He is certain of the perfect faultlessness of all that He says and does. "I do always those things that please the Father."<sup>1</sup> "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me."<sup>2</sup> "Which of you convinceth Me of sin ?"<sup>3</sup>

Was this an illusion, or did it correspond with the fact ? He was surrounded by jealous observers ; by men whom not a few motives rendered anxious, if they could, to show that He was, after all, like others around Him, like themselves, a sinner. He could reckon on no forbearance, no generosity, no equity, in his opponents. Yet He passed their criticism unscathed. "Which of you," He could say, "convinceth Me of sin ?" And there was silence. Vague charges indeed there were, such as that He was in league with the powers of evil,<sup>4</sup> or that He was a revolutionist.<sup>5</sup> But these soon refuted themselves. And ever since, during eighteen centuries, the curiosity and the passions of mankind have been at work upon the records of His Life, and have succeeded no better than did His contemporaries. Now and then the critics think that they have made good a case against His moral perfection. But presently it is shown that some fundamental circumstance in His position and claims has been overlooked, or that some unwarranted assumption has been imported into the discussion. And again He asks, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin ?" And again there is silence.

<sup>1</sup> St. John viii. 29.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xiv. 30.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. viii. 46.<sup>4</sup> St. Matt. ix. 34 ; xii. 24.<sup>5</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 1, 2.



In this sinlessness He is, although our Model, yet beyond our full reach of imitation. In our broken lives we cannot reproduce the complete image of the Immaculate Lamb. The best of men knows that in his best moments he is beset by motives, or thoughts, or inclinations, from which Christ was utterly free. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."<sup>1</sup> But this does not destroy, it rather enhances, the value of Our Lord's example. In all departments of thought and work, the Ideal is, strictly speaking, unattainable by man; yet man should never lose sight of it. In the Gospels Ideal Human Life appears in a form of flesh and blood; it is the Ideal, and beyond us; yet not the less precious as a stimulus and a guide to our efforts at self-improvement.

2. Secondly, we are struck by the balance and proportion of excellences in our Lord's human character. As a rule, if a man possesses some one excellence in an unusual degree, he will be found to exhibit some fault or shortcoming in an opposite direction. If he is dignified, he is probably proud; if he is kind and communicative, he is not unlikely to be wanting in self-respect. If he is thoughtful and reflective, he is also, it may be, cold and unsympathising; if he is affectionate and warm-hearted, he is liable to gusts of thoughtless impulse. Is he sincere?—he perhaps thinks it necessary to exhibit his honesty in sulkiness or incivility. Is he civil and considerate?—perchance, he carries his courtesy to the verge of insincerity. The intellectual are often wanting in affection; the affectionate are sometimes unintelligent. Our finite and fallen nature exhausts itself by an effort in a single direction; it would almost seem bound to atone for a temporary success by some compensating failure.

Of this want of balance in excellence, of this exaggeration in particular forms of excellence which entails an accompanying defect, there is no trace in our Lord. Read His Life over and over again, with this point in view; and nothing will strike you more than its faultless proportions. In so vast a field, take one illustration out of many: the balance which He keeps between severity and tenderness.

Certainly there is a severity in His attitude towards evil, especially towards insincerity, which startles us. It flashes from Him only now and then; but with terrible force. He

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. John i. 8.

calls the generation in which He lives adulterous,<sup>1</sup> evil,<sup>2</sup> sinful,<sup>3</sup> wicked,<sup>4</sup> perverse.<sup>5</sup> He says that the blood of all the prophets which has been shed from the foundation of the world shall be required of it.<sup>6</sup> He announces that Capernaum, which is exalted unto heaven, shall be cast down to hell.<sup>7</sup> He is unsparing in His denunciations of the Pharisees and Scribes : “Ye love greetings in the market-places ;”<sup>8</sup> “Ye bind heavy burdens on men’s shoulders, but ye yourselves touch them not with one of your fingers ;”<sup>9</sup> “Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte ;”<sup>10</sup> “Ye strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel ;”<sup>11</sup> “Ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers ;”<sup>12</sup> “Whited sepulchres, ye appear righteous before men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”<sup>13</sup>

We do not know enough of our fellow-men ever to use this language : but at least we may endeavour to follow our Lord in the hatred of evil which He thus expresses. No good man can be indifferent towards evil. “Neither doth he abhor anything that is evil,”<sup>14</sup> is the note of the reprobate.

Yet there is a tenderness in our Lord, which is not elsewhere found in combination with such severity. He is not a cold philosopher, who exposes weakness, and has no pity for sorrow. He does not condescend to us as from a superior level : He is, among us, as one of ourselves, “touched with a feeling of our infirmities.”<sup>15</sup> He is at home at Bethany ; “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”<sup>16</sup> He sheds tears at the grave of Lazarus.<sup>17</sup> He weeps over Jerusalem at the thought of its approaching ruin.<sup>18</sup> He absolves the sinner, knowing all about her past history ; as she seeks Him out in the Pharisee’s house, and bathes His Feet with her tears.<sup>19</sup> He takes the part of the convicted adulteress against her accusers : “Neither do I condemn thee.”<sup>20</sup> All this would be easy if He were indifferent to moral evil. He hates it as man never hated it before, yet He is tenderness itself towards its victims.

3. Consider again a feature which runs through His whole character ; its simplicity. In nothing that He says or does can we detect any trace of contrivance or of aiming at effect.

<sup>1</sup> St Matt xii. 39 ; xvi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xii. 34.

<sup>3</sup> St Matt. xii. 45.

<sup>4</sup> St. Matt xi. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xvii. 17.

<sup>6</sup> St. Luke xi. 43.

<sup>7</sup> St. Matt. xxiii. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 27, 28.

<sup>10</sup> Ps. xxxvi. 4.

<sup>11</sup> St. John xi. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. vii. 37, 38, 48.

<sup>14</sup> St. John viii. 11.

<sup>15</sup> St. Mark viii. 38.

<sup>16</sup> St. Luke xi. 50.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 46.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Heb. iv. 15.

<sup>20</sup> St Luke xix. 41

We all know how rare in ordinary life is an approach to perfect simplicity of character. "Every man," says a cynical maxim, "is, at some time, an actor." The effort to create an impression is the result sometimes of timidity, sometimes of vanity. But it always mars moral beauty, whether in speech or work. Our Lord always says what He has to say in the most natural and unpretending words. His sentences unfold themselves without effort or system, just as persons and occasions demand. He uses the language, not of the schools, but of the people; as, in other circumstances, we may be sure, He would have used the language, not of the people, but of the schools. He is thus at once simple and profound; profound, as was never man before, because so simple. We all of us understand the Sermon on the Mount, or the Last Discourse in the Supper-Room. Yet we are conscious, dimly though it be, of heights and depths behind the well-known words, which reach away into infinitude. He takes the illustrations which come ready to His Hand, or which meet His Eye: the birds of the air,<sup>1</sup> the rain,<sup>2</sup> the red and lowering sky,<sup>3</sup> the lily,<sup>4</sup> the grain of mustard-seed,<sup>5</sup> the corn,<sup>6</sup> the ruined tower of Siloam.<sup>7</sup> On these He grafts this or that fragment of the Eternal Truth. We cannot enrich His teaching by any additions. Our crude efforts could not but disfigure its incomparable beauty.

As with His Words, so is it with His actions. He acts with a view to the glory of God the Father, and with a view to nothing else. Hence a directness and transparency in His conduct, which we feel in every detail of it. He is a poor Man, and He never affects to be independent of His class. He is never eccentric. His dress, His mode of life, His habits, are without a trace of pretension or singularity. He pursues His great work sitting by a well,<sup>8</sup> or on a mountain,<sup>9</sup> or in a fishing-boat,<sup>10</sup> or on the shore of a lake,<sup>11</sup> or in a synagogue,<sup>12</sup> or in one of the porches of the Temple,<sup>13</sup> or as He walks along the road.<sup>14</sup>

Every situation yields its opportunity ready to His Hand. He attends a wedding,<sup>15</sup> He cures a paralytic,<sup>16</sup> He writes upon the ground,<sup>17</sup> He eats with the Pharisees,<sup>18</sup> He raises the dead

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. vi. 25, 26.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. v. 45.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xvi. 2, 3.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. vi. 28-34.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xiii. 31.<sup>6</sup> St. John xii. 24.<sup>7</sup> St. Luke xiii. 4.<sup>8</sup> St. John iv. 6-26.<sup>9</sup> St. Matt. v. vi. vii.<sup>10</sup> Ibid. xiii. 2-52.<sup>11</sup> St. John xxi. 4-22.<sup>12</sup> St. Matt. iv. 23; xiii. 54.<sup>13</sup> St. John x. 23-38.<sup>14</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 15-39<sup>15</sup> St. John ii. 1-11.<sup>16</sup> St. Mark ii. 3-12.<sup>17</sup> St. John viii. 6, 8.<sup>18</sup> St. Luke vii. 36.

to life,<sup>1</sup> He washes His disciples' feet ;<sup>2</sup> as each occasion comes, from day to day, from hour to hour. The most important and awful acts follow on with the most trivial and ordinary. There is no effort, no disturbing or pretentious movement. All is simple, as though all were commonplace. This absence of anything like an attempt to produce an unusual impression reveals a Soul possessed with a sense of the majesty and power of Truth. Depend upon it, in the degree in which any man becomes really great he becomes simple also.

4. One further point to be remarked in our Lord's example is the stress which it lays upon those forms of excellence which make no great show, such as patience, humility, meekness, and the like. As we read the Gospels, we are led to see that the highest type of human excellence consists less in acting well than in suffering well. The ancient world never understood this. With the ancients virtue was active force. Yet the conditions of our human life are such that, whether we will or not, we are more frequently called upon to endure than to act. Therefore the spirit in which we endure is of capital importance. Our Lord restored passive virtue to its true and forgotten place in human conduct. He revealed the beauty, the majesty of patience, meekness, uncomplaining submission. He Himself achieved more than any of the sons of men. But we may dare to say that He suffered more than He achieved, or rather, that His work was largely achieved by suffering. It is this side of His example of which St. Peter is thinking as being so useful to the Christian slaves to whom for the moment he is writing. "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not ; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously."<sup>3</sup> Christ had before Him a purpose of infinite beneficence ; that of recovering man to God and to endless happiness. Yet in carrying it out He met with scorn, resistance, hatred, persecution. He was suspected, denounced, traduced. His Name was cast out as evil. Justice, alike in its form and its spirit, was conspicuously violated in order to crush Him. Religion itself was prostituted to the lowest purposes of private animosity. He was led forth to die, amid a tempest of denunciation, which was from first to last unmerited. Man's ingratitude and hatred pierced His soul. Yet no unkind or impatient word

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. ix. 23-25 ; St. Luke vii. 12-15 ; St. John xi. 43, 44.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xiii. 4, 5.

<sup>3</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 23.

falls from Him. He bears in silence the contradiction of sinners against Himself.<sup>1</sup> He prays, "Father, forgive them."<sup>2</sup> He is obedient unto death.<sup>3</sup>

"Leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps." 'Yes,' it is said, 'it is a beautiful, a transcendental picture ; and if Christ were merely man, we might perhaps imitate Him ! But then the Church and the Bible tell us that He is God as well as Man ; and this seems to remove Him from the category of beings whom man can imitate. He has a Higher Nature, distinct capacities, another sphere of action. He is a superhuman Personage. His theological glory in the fourth Gospel is fatal to His moral value as a human Model in the first three.'

My brethren, the difference between Jesus Christ and ourselves is indeed infinite ; it is the difference between the Creator and the creature. And yet He is also truly Man ; and for the purposes of imitation the truth of His Manhood secures all that we require. For the purposes of imitation, He is practically not more out of our reach than is a father of great genius and goodness out of the reach of his child. There are many actions, many words, many silences which the child can understand ; they are quite independent of the father's superiority, and they have the same significance whether the father is their author or the child. Nay more, identity of nature is not necessary to imitation. We may at times imitate even the lower creatures with advantage : in their generosity, their patience, their brightness, their forgivingness. And if we saw the blessed angels who are around us and tend us, we should surely see majestic beings, in many ways utterly above us, yet whose patience and love and industry we might well copy. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself bids us be perfect even as our Father Which is in heaven is perfect.<sup>4</sup> Certainly we cannot imitate Jesus Christ when He heals the sick, or raises the dead. But we can enter into and cherish the spirit of those high works of mercy. We can do the natural kindnesses which are akin to them. And there are deeds and words of His which we can copy in the letter as well as the spirit.

Indeed, the objection has been already solved by the experience of eighteen centuries. *The Imitation of Christ* is the title of that exquisite book of the Flemish recluse, Thomas à Kempis, which approaches more nearly to the perfect spirit

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 3.    <sup>2</sup> St. Luke xxiii. 34.    <sup>3</sup> Phil. ii. 8.    <sup>4</sup> St. Matt. v. 48.



of the New Testament than any which has been written since the death of the Apostles. *The Imitation of Christ* is the perpetual source of saintly effort in the Church of Christ. Generation follows generation, looking unto Jesus.<sup>1</sup> One man says, I will imitate His patience ; and another, I will copy His humility ; and a third, I would practise, though afar off, His obedience ; and a fourth, His love for men ; and another, His simplicity ; and another, His benevolence ; and another, His perpetual communion with the Father ; and another, His renunciation of His Own Will. When one point is gained, others follow. Thus, little by little, "Christ is formed,"<sup>2</sup> as St. Paul expresses it, in the characters of His servants. Thus, practically speaking, experience has shown that our Lord's Divinity is no bar whatever to our imitation of His Life as Man.

This imitation of our Lord is not a duty which we are free to accept or decline. "The elect," says St. Paul, "are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son of God."<sup>3</sup> If there is no effort at conformity, there is no true note of predestination. We cannot enter into the designs of God in giving us His Son, if we are making no efforts to be like Him. It has been said with truth that every good man with whom we meet in life adds to our responsibility. One day we must account for the use we have made of his example. But what must be our responsibility for the knowledge of that Life Which is described in the Gospels ? "Never but once passed before the imagination of man, and never but once was witnessed on this earth so heavenly a vision." "There alone, in all human history, we meet a Being Who never did an injury, and never resented one ; Who never uttered an untruth ; never lost an opportunity of doing good ; Who was generous among the selfish ; upright among the false ; pure among the sensual ; wiser far than the wisest of the sons of men ; loving, gentle, yet withal invincibly resolute ; never so meek and patient as when persecuted by a cruel and ungrateful world."<sup>4</sup> A devoted layman of the Church of England<sup>5</sup> said on his deathbed, that, on reviewing his life, the omission which he chiefly deplored was that he had not made a daily effort to study and imitate Jesus Christ as He is described in the Gospels. Is not this a common omission even with serious Christians ? Should we

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xii. 2.<sup>2</sup> Gal. iv. 19.<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 29.<sup>4</sup> Young, *Christ of History* ; quoted from memory<sup>5</sup> Mr. John Bowdler.



not do what we may, while yet we may, thus to follow in the footsteps of the Perfect Man?

And to return to the words of the Collect: if we have any fear lest, in copying our Lord's example, we should forget His Atoning Death, or His indwelling Presence; that too will be best decided by experiment. His example shows us what we were meant to be; but it also reveals to us, with unsparing frankness, what we are. There is a sense in which Christ's example is like the Jewish law. Like the old Jewish law, it is a standard of life; only a far higher and more exacting standard. Like the Jewish law, the Life of Christ reveals to us our own sins and shortcomings; like the law, the Life of Christ is a schoolmaster to bring us to the Cross of Christ. We come to Him, out of heart with ourselves, emptied, happily emptied, of self; crushed by a sense of our utter unworthiness to bear His Name and to wear His livery. And once more He extends His pierced Hand to pardon, and He offers His Body and His Blood to strengthen our souls for such work as may be needed to make us more like Himself. Surely those of us will most thankfully receive Christ's inestimable benefit, in becoming the great Sacrifice for sin, and, by His Presence within the soul, the hope of Glory,<sup>1</sup> who have known what it is to try, ever so feebly, "to follow in the blessed steps of His most Holy Life."

<sup>1</sup> Col. i. 27.

## SERMON XXXI.

### TRUTH THE BOND OF LOVE.

2 ST. JOHN 1, 2.

*The Elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth; and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth; for the Truth's sake, Which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.*

HOW much is implied, very often, by the phrase or style with which a letter is begun or ended! How different is the formal "Sir" from "My dear Sir;" and, again, how much does this differ from the intimacy which addresses by a Christian name! How many shades of feeling are represented by "Your obedient servant," "Your faithful servant," "Yours truly," "Yours very faithfully," "Yours affectionately," "Yours most affectionately"! Those different styles mean a great deal; and as it is now, so it was in the Apostolic age. The opening words of St. John's Second Epistle are full of interest of this kind. They introduce us to a whole department of private or personal feeling, just as truly as any letter we may receive by the post to-morrow morning.

How does the writer describe himself? "John, an Apostle of Jesus Christ," or "John, a servant of Jesus Christ?" No; this is the style of other Apostles: of St. Paul, St. Peter, St. James, St. Jude. St. John calls himself simply "the Elder," both in this and his third letter, to Gaius. Perhaps the word had better be rendered "Presbyter," as indeed it stands in the original. It has led some persons to suppose, both in ancient and modern times, that these two Epistles were not written by the Apostle John at all, but by a Presbyter named John, who lived at Ephesus at the same time as the Apostle. But to say nothing of the prevailing belief of the Church, this opinion is not fairly borne out by the contents of the Epistles themselves. To mention one particular only, it is inconsistent with the tone

of Apostolical authority in which the writer refers to the "many deceivers who have come into the world" as "anti-christs" in the Second Epistle,<sup>1</sup> and to Diotrephes, with his passion for pre-eminence, in the Third.<sup>2</sup> The truth would appear to be that St. John calls himself by way of endearment "the Presbyter," when writing to a family with which he has been long on terms of intimacy. Nothing is more welcome to persons of simple character who are in high office than an opportunity of laying its formalities aside; they like to address others and to be themselves addressed in their personal capacity, or by a title in which there is more affection than form. Every one knows how largely this might be illustrated from the annals of royalty; and years before St. John wrote, St. Peter had set the example of dropping his Apostolic title when writing to his brethren in Christ's work. "The elders," or presbyters, "which are among you I exhort, who am also a presbyter and a witness of the sufferings of Christ."<sup>3</sup> And so it would seem that, just as we might speak of some one person as "the Vicar," or "the Colonel," as if there was no one else in the world who held these offices, so St. John was known in the family to which he writes by the affectionately familiar title of "the Presbyter." And he introduces himself to them by a description around which so much affection had gathered, and which seemed to have acquired a new appropriateness in his advanced age. Although in the eye of the whole Christian Church he filled the great place of an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and as such had jurisdiction over the whole body of the faithful; although he had been admitted by the Divine Master to an intimacy of affection shared with no other Apostle; although he was now the only surviving representative of the Sacred College; yet he puts out of sight this weight of high station and of untold responsibility; and when he would pour out his heart to the chosen mother and her children, he calls himself by a name which at once puts them at their ease with him. He is simply "the Presbyter."

To whom does he write? "The Presbyter to the elect lady and her children." There is no sufficient reason for supposing, with some writers, that by "elect lady" St. John is personifying a particular Christian Church. He is writing to an actual individual: to a Christian mother and her family. It may be that the word translated "lady" is really a proper name, "Kyria." But this would not affect the idea we must form of

<sup>1</sup> 2 St. John 7.<sup>2</sup> 3 St. John 9.<sup>3</sup> 1 St. Pet. v. 1.

her position and character. She was an elderly person, probably a widow, living with her grown-up children. When St. John says that she was loved by "all them that knew the truth," he makes it plain that her name was at least well known in the Asiatic Churches, and that she was a person of real and high excellence. There were many such good women in the Church of the Apostolic age. What Dorcas was to St. Peter :<sup>1</sup> what Lydia of Philippi,<sup>2</sup> and Phœbe of Cenchrea,<sup>3</sup> and Priscilla,<sup>4</sup> and many others, were to St. Paul, such was this Christian lady to St. John. Long before this, as it is probable, the Blessed Virgin Mother, whom our Lord, speaking from His Cross, had committed to the care of the most beloved of His disciples, had been taken to her rest. And the "elect lady and her children, whom he loved in the truth," would have helped to brighten, with human affection, the later years of the aged Saint who had thus outlived all his contemporaries.

Here then, within the sacred canon, is an Apostolic letter ; and to whom is it written ? Not to Apostolic Christendom, as was St. John's First Epistle ; not to some separate Church of more or less importance, as were most of St. Paul's Epistles ; not to great bishops, as were the pastoral instructions to Timothy and Titus ; not to a fellow-labourer with Apostles, as the letter to Philemon ; not to a Christian, whose works of charity were witnessed before the Church, alike by brethren and by strangers, as was St. John's last correspondent, Gains. St. John writes to a lady and her children, living apparently in retirement, with no public title to a claim on the attention of the Apostle. And thus, in the Bible itself, we are face to face with a relationship of intimate friendship, which might have existed, and the like of which does constantly exist, in our own days not less truly than in those of the Apostles. The Christianity of Ephesus under St. John's eyes was not an ideal and abstract thing, acting upon men and upon life quite differently from anything we witness now. Then as now it was a living practical influence ; a domestic friend, multiplying, modifying, colouring, brightening, purifying the daily relations of life. It came home to Christians in the first century as it comes home to them in the nineteenth, as a bond of friendship. In this view, and with an eye to practical guidance, St. John's affectionate address to the Christian mother and her family deserves careful attention.

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 36-39.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xvi. 14, 15.<sup>3</sup> Rom. xvi. 1.<sup>4</sup> Acts xviii. 1-3, 18, 26 ; Rom. xvi. 3, 4.

Let us then consider the moral atmosphere which surrounded, and the motive-power which created and sustained, that strong bond of affection which bound the heart of St. John to the Christian lady and her family.

### I.

The atmosphere of this friendship was sincerity. "Whom I love," not in *the* truth (there is no article in the original), but "in truth." Not "truly:" St. John would have used an adverb to say that. What he means is that truth—truth of thought, truth of feeling, truth of speech and intercourse—was the very air in which his affection for this Christian lady had grown up and maintained itself. And the word which he uses to describe this affection points to the same conclusion. It does not mean instinctive personal affection; affection based on feeling and impulse, such as exists between near relations. Still less does it denote that lower form of affection, which has its roots and its energy in passion and sense. It stands for that kind of affection which is based on a reasoned perception of excellence in its object; and thus it is the word which is invariably used to describe the love that man ought to have for God. But such a love as this between man and man grows up and is fostered in an atmosphere of truthfulness. It is grounded, not on feeling or passion, but on a reciprocal conviction of simplicity of purpose; and, being true in its origin, it is true at every stage of its development. It is mortally wounded, this "love in truth," when once it is conscious of distinct insincerity. When once it has reason to doubt the worthiness of its object; when once it falters, in its utterance of simple truth, from a secret fear that there is something which cannot be probed to the quick, or which cannot bear the sunlight, then its life is gone, even though its forms and courtesies should survive. It may even be strengthened by a temporary misunderstanding when each friend is sincere. It dies, when there is on either side a well-grounded suspicion of the taint of insincerity.

That the sense of a common integrity of purpose, a common anxiety to be true, and to recognise truth, is an atmosphere especially favourable to the growth of personal friendships, is observable at this moment in England among students of the natural sciences. Here and there you may note petty jealousies; the desire to anticipate a rival; the envy of a great reputation;



the disposition to patent for purposes of selfish gain a discovery which belongs rightly, not to any single genius, but to humanity at large. But these things are the exception : they are not the rule. The rule is that the pursuit of scientific truth, in this respect unlike the practice of a common profession or art, has a tendency to create a sense of fellowship which soon ripens into friendship. The common investigation, prosecuted day by day, into natural facts and laws ; the assurance of a common nobility of purpose, of a common liability to failure, of a common anxiety to pursue and proclaim fact—creates a feeling of brotherhood which traverses other differences, and is an enrichment of human life. It is not a common share in ascertained truth which is here in question, because there may be the widest difference as to what truth is ascertained. It is a common determination to be loyal to truth ; to assert when assertion is a duty, and at all costs ; to retract when retraction is a duty, and at all costs. Thus there is a communion of the truthful in the halls of Science, as there is a communion of the saints on earth and in Paradise : there are signs discerned by the far-sighted penetration of truthful minds in all who bear the same patent of moral nobility, and these signs at once form a title to affection and respect.

It was in a common sense of truthfulness of purpose that St. John's love for the lady and her children grew and strengthened. Differing, as we know they did, in the positions they respectively filled in the Christian Church ; differing, as we may presume they did, in other moral and in almost all spiritual endowments, very greatly indeed ; they yet had this common bond between them, that they loved truth for its own sake. Truthfulness was the atmosphere in which they both lived, and which made each an object of affection to the other. "The Presbyter to the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth."

St. John loved this lady and her children "in truth ;" and therefore he did not hesitate, when occasion made it a duty, to put a strain on their affection. Those who love in truth, like St. John, can, when it is necessary to do so, carry out St. Paul's precept about speaking the truth in love. There is such a thing as speaking the truth in ill-nature, or in hatred. We may insist on truth, not for the sake of those to whom we speak, but because truth happens to coincide with our own prejudice. We wish to have our fling. We are more anxious to have truth on our side than to be on the side of truth.



Many true things are said, not in the interests of truth, but in the interests of passion ; not for the benefit of the instructed, but for the gratification of the instructor. This is to speak the truth in selfishness ; and it rouses a keener sense of opposition than is roused by the proclamation of simple falsehood. For it is felt, and felt truly, that truth is here made to do work which, if it were possible, would degrade her, by thus harnessing her to the chariot of selfish passion ; and the very force and power which is inseparable from truth is the measure of the antagonism which is created by a conviction that it is not for her own sake, but for something very different indeed in nature and purpose, that she is invoked at all.

St. John, as a great master of faith and charity, could be at once tender and uncompromising. It was necessary in these days at Ephesus. There were dangers to which the Apostle could not close his eyes. His love was not a vague sentiment, unregulated by any principle ; it was a love of all men, but it was pre-eminently a love of each man's immortal soul. Therefore in proportion to its sincerity and intensity it was outspoken. There were new teachers at Ephesus who confessed not that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh.<sup>1</sup> They denied the very fundamental truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God. St. John rejoices to hear that some of the children of this lady walked in truth.<sup>2</sup> But he also implies that some did not. He entreats the family not to imperil his work among them ; they must see to it, "that we lose not the things that we have wrought."<sup>3</sup> He advises them to shun contact with erroneous teachers : what chance, humanly speaking, would this Christian mother have in an intellectual encounter with the trained and subtle apostles of falsehood ? "If any come unto you, and bring not this doctrine," namely, that of the Apostles, "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed : for he that biddeth him God speed is a partaker of his evil deeds."<sup>4</sup> St. John, the Apostle of love, uses language which the world, with its strange fondness for the charity of indifference, would call uncharitable. Yet it is because St. John loves, not in a sentimental, hazy, fruitless way, but in truth, and because he knows that the accents of love will not be misunderstood, that he is thus outspoken.

It would be well, brethren, if there was more of love in truth, as distinct from love by impulse, among us ; among those of us, for instance, who are already bound to each other by ties

<sup>1</sup> 2 St. John 7.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 4.<sup>3</sup> Ibid 8.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. 10, 11.

of natural affection. Sincerity does not chill natural love ; but it raises a mere passion to the rank of a moral power. How much trouble might parents not save their children in after years by a little plain speaking, dictated, not by the desire to assert authority, but by simple affection ! How many a son can and does give as his excuse for doing wrong, " My father never told me that there was any harm in it " ! Too often parents love their children, not in truth, but with a purely selfish love. They will not risk a passing misunderstanding, even for the sake of the child's best interests hereafter. And they live to find that in the event such love defeats its object, by forfeiting those solid titles to gratitude and respect which a perfect sincerity can alone secure.

## II.

What was the motive-power of St. John's love ? St. John replies, " For the Truth's sake, Which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." He adds that all who knew the Truth share in this affection. Here we have an article before " Truth " : " the Truth " means here, not a habit or temper of mind, but a body of ascertained fact, which is fact, whether acknowledged or not by the mind to be so. What is here called " the Truth " by St. John, we should in modern language speak of as " the True Faith." This was the combining link, as sincerity of purpose was the atmosphere, of the affection which existed between this Christian lady and St. John.

Doubtless there are many other links which produce among men a feeling of brotherhood. A sense of common wrong will do this. It is not to be supposed that the match-makers, who walked through the City last Monday, were all of them on terms of mutual endearment before the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced his budget in Parliament. They were probably many of them rivals in their trade.<sup>1</sup> But you could not meet them without feeling that they were, at least for the time being, on terms of the greatest intimacy ; this intimacy was created by their sharing in common the sense of a real or supposed wrong. The same effect is sometimes produced by a common triumph. After a victory or a political success men's hearts are opened towards each other ; and travellers tell how,

<sup>1</sup> Procession of the match-makers to the Houses of Parliament, to deprecate Mr. Lowe's proposed addition to the budget, on Monday, April 24, 1871.

among the warm-hearted and impulsive peoples of Southern Europe, this shows itself in outward demonstrations of affection,—hand-claspings, embraces, tears,—which would be unnatural in us colder Englishmen. But in cases of this kind feeling is transient: it passes with the occasion. By this time, no doubt, the match-makers, having gained their point, have returned to social feelings of an average temperature.

What was wanted for humanity was a bond, strong enough in itself, and in the permanency of its effects, to link heart to heart, wherever it was acknowledged. It has been urged that the consciousness of being a man, of having a share in the great brotherhood of humankind, ought to do this of itself. It ought, no doubt, according to the original design of God. But, does it? As a matter of fact, does man love his brother man? Do the Europeans, as a rule, love the African races, simply because they are men? Do Englishmen love foreigners? Did they, two generations ago, love Frenchmen? Do you now love Russians? Nay; does the sense of a common humanity suffice to cancel the differences which political and social causes create among ourselves? And if not, why not? Have we not here one of the many evidences of some disorganising influence in humanity, which makes all expectation of a widespread love of man as man utterly Utopian, unless a new tie shall bind together human hearts, with a more than human power?

Yes; another link was needed to bind men together; and St. John recognised this link in that body of Divinely revealed facts which he calls "the Truth." By the Truth St. John here means a something the very existence of which appears improbable or impossible to some minds in our own day. He means a body of ascertained facts about God, about the soul, about the means of reaching God, and being blessed by Him, about the Eternal Future, about the true rule of man's conduct, and the true secret of his happiness and well-being. Other knowledge which human beings possess is no doubt true; such, for instance, as that which enables us to make the most of the visible world in which God has placed us. But St. John calls this higher knowledge *the Truth*; as being incomparably more important; as interesting man, not merely in his capacity of a creature of time, but in his capacity of a being destined for eternity. And this truth, as St. John conceived it, was not merely a set of propositions resting upon evidence. It was that: but it was more. It centred in a Person, Whom St. John had seen, heard, touched, handled; Who had lived as

man never lived before, had spoken as man never spake before, had died in agony, and had risen in triumph from death, and had left the world with an assurance that He would return to judge it. That Teacher, Whom St. John had known, did not merely say, "I teach the truth;" other teachers have said that. He said in so many words, "I am the Truth."<sup>1</sup> He meant that what He said and did was final and absolute; that man would never get beyond Him to a higher knowledge of God; that all truth centred in or radiated from Him. St. John believed this. While others, early Gnostics for instance, maintained that every religious creed, Christianity included, is but the product of an effort of the human mind to hold communion with the Infinite; that every creed therefore is only relatively true, combining a certain proportion of truth with a certain proportion of error; that to ascribe absolute truth to any one creed is an intellectual impertinence; St. John proclaimed, simply, fearlessly: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup>

To share this faith was to share a bond of common affection. To have the same Ideal of conduct before the soul; the same view of the meaning of life; the same hopes and fears about that which will follow it; above all, the same devotion to a Person,—the Incomparable Person of Jesus Christ—was to have a vast fund of common sympathy. Students who have worked side by side; soldiers who have fought side by side; children who have been brought up in one household, know something of this sympathy which is the full inheritance of Christians. It traverses differences of age, differences of station, differences of culture. It unites St. John, soaring with his eagle eye to the highest heavens, and the sincere but probably commonplace mother of a family in Ephesus. It had created this friendship. St. John was Christ's Apostle because of his faith in Christ; and this faith was the binding link between himself and the Christian mother. To us it might have seemed that, with the Church expanding around him, St. John's mind would have been wholly occupied with the larger interests of administration; and that he would have had no leisure to attend to the wants of individuals. And if St. John had been only a statesman, endeavouring to carry out a great policy, or only a philosopher intent upon diffusing his ideas, he would

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 6.<sup>2</sup> 1 St John v. 20.

have contented himself, to use the modern phrase, with "acting upon the masses." But as an Apostle of Christ he had a very different work to do : he had to save souls. And souls are to be saved, not gregariously, but one by one. Each soul is the fruit, generally speaking, of much patient and loving toil on the part of some one Christian worker. This work is too great, too awful, to be done compendiously ; there is nothing in the spiritual world which really corresponds to those inventions in machinery which supersede the need of individual hand-labour. Souls are saved in all ages through the earnest efforts of other souls, themselves illumined by Christian truth, and warmed by Christian love. They who are brought out of darkness and error into a knowledge and love of God and His Blessed Son, generally are brought, as were Timothy of Derbe, Lydia of Philippi, Philemon of Colosse, Kyria of Ephesus, and Phœbe of Corinth, by the loving interest and care of some servant of Christ. No philosophy can thus create and combine. The philosophers of all ages, even if good friends among themselves, can only set up a fancied aristocracy of intellect for themselves, and are very jealous about admitting the people into the Olympus of their sympathies. No political scheme can do this : history is there to answer. But love, with sincerity for its sphere, and with Jesus Christ for its object, can do it. Love did it of old, love does it now.

But already I hear the retort which this assertion provokes. 'Do you venture,' some one says, 'to say that love still binds Christian to Christian, when our society is itself divided by the divisions of Christians, when the very world is deafened by the noise of Christian controversy ? Do you suppose that your rhetorical pictures will for one moment stand the test of our actual experience ? And if they will not, is it not imprudent to challenge a comparison between the ideal and the reality ; between that which is before our eyes, and that which ought to be ?'

My brethren, I admit that within Christendom, within the Church, there are divisions, many and regrettable. But were there none, think you, at Ephesus in the days of St. John ? Only read what he writes to Gaius, in his Third Epistle, about Diotrephes.<sup>1</sup> But, you reply, are not our divisions more serious ? Do they not at times deepen into a severance on fundamental points ? So it was in St. John's day, at least in the case of Cerinthus and his sympathisers ; for such there were still

<sup>1</sup> 3 St. John 9, 10.



within the Church.<sup>1</sup> Yet love, the love of the Apostle for all the faithful, the love of the faithful for each other, remained. True, we hear much and unavoidably of Christian differences to-day: and the world anxiously chronicles our misunderstandings, if it does not exaggerate them. It says nothing of that which underlies them; the deep, loving, praying, working life of the Church of Christ. It photographs the spots on the sun's surface, but it says nothing of the sun. It studies the life of Christendom as a certain student is said to have studied the history of England: he confined himself upon principle to the great rebellion of the seventeenth century. It forgets that men do not quarrel about that which does not interest them, and that it is easy to be charitable when you are profoundly indifferent. But anything is better than the torpor of a materialised people, to whom God and eternity are as if they did not exist. If unity is better far than the misunderstandings of brethren, any misunderstandings are preferable to stolid unconcern about matters of the first importance. And as I have said, the relative importance of differences may be easily exaggerated. The surface of the Atlantic may be swept by a hurricane till its waves run thirty feet high. But a few fathoms below this agitation there are tranquil depths in which the storm is as unfelt as if all was calm, and which will be as they are when the tempest has abated.

And, among the counteracting and restorative influences which carry the Church of Christ unharmed through the animated and sometimes passionate discussion of public questions, private friendships, formed and strengthened in the atmosphere of a fearless sincerity, and knit and banded together by a common share in the Faith of ages, are, humanly speaking, among the strongest. One and all, we may, at some time, realise to the letter the language of St. John to this Christian mother. Many who are here must realise it now. They have learnt to love in truth, not by impulse. They have learnt to bind and rivet their love by the strong bond of the common and unchanging Faith. All who know anything of Jesus Christ know something of this affection for some of His servants: some of us, it may be, know much, much more than we can feel that we deserve. May He of His grace nevertheless strengthen it; may He strengthen all love

<sup>1</sup> The teachers alluded to in 1 St. John iv. 1-3 must not be confounded with those in 1 St. John ii. 19. The former were still in communion with the Church: the latter had passed out of her.



that is nurtured in an atmosphere of truth, and secured by faith in His Adorable Person and His Redemptive Work. For such love is not like a human passion, which dies gradually away with the enfeeblement and the death of the nerves and of the brain. It is created and fed by the truth which "dwelleth" in the Christian soul, and which, as St. John adds, "shall be with us for ever." It is guaranteed to last, even as its Eternal Object lasts. It is born and is matured amid the things of time. But from the first it belongs to, and in the event it is incorporated with, the life of Eternity.

## SERMON XXXII.

### FREEDOM AND LAW.

I ST. PETER II. 16.

*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*

ST. PETER here touches a note which appeals to the human heart in all ages and everywhere. Freedom is one of those words which need no recommendation : it belongs to the same category as light, order, progress, law. It is one of the ideas which, in some sense or other, mankind accepts as an axiom ; as a landmark or principle of healthful life which is beyond discussion. What do we mean by freedom ? We mean the power of a living being to act without hindrance according to the true law of its life. A mineral, therefore, is in no sense capable of freedom ; it neither grows nor moves ; it does not live. A tree, in a very attenuated or in a metaphorical sense, is capable of freedom : a tree does contain within itself the mystery of a vital principle, which requires certain conditions for its necessary development : and thus we may speak of its having freedom to grow. The lower animals, in very various degrees, are capable of something which may with much better reason be called freedom ; their capacity for it varies proportionately to their approach to the frontier of self-conscious, self-determining life as manifested in human beings. The brute does not merely grow, he moves from place to place. He does not move by any fatal necessity, but can take this direction or that as his instinct prompts him. To interfere with his movement is to limit his freedom. Still it is only instinct which he obeys. He does not reflect ; he does not choose, while comprehending his power of choice : he is really, from moment to moment, governed by that which is for the

time being the strongest impulse or passion upon him. If he is free to run about, to eat what he likes, to sleep and rest when he likes, he has all that he wants. His instinct will probably guide him to sleep, eat, and take exercise in such proportions and at such times as the law of his life requires.

With man it is otherwise. For man is a moral being : he reflects, and knows what he is doing when he reflects ; he chooses, and knows what he is doing in this exercise of choice. Much of man's life, no doubt, is vegetative, like that of a tree. More of it is sentient and under the government of instinct, like that of an animal. We men go through thousands of movements and acts, every day of our lives, without, as we say, thinking about them. We obey instinct, or habit, or some governing inclination, without throwing any conscious and deliberate energy into the act of obedience. But our true life is higher than this. Man lives and acts as man ; he asserts that which is properly his human freedom, when he obeys some law which he knows he can disobey. For man is a moral being, and in this his greatness consists. We may often hear or read fine platitudes about the insignificance of man as compared with the planets ; with the stars and suns that shine above our heads. Certainly, if the greatness of created beings is to be determined by their material bulk, man is insignificant enough. He ranks far below many other animals around him on his own planet. But man can do that which no planet can do : he can obey or refuse to obey the highest law of his life. The planet cannot leave its appointed orbit. It circles on, age after age, in obedience to the law which governs it : God has "given it a law which shall not be broken."<sup>1</sup> Man can disobey the highest law of his life : this liberty is at once his prerogative and his danger. The highest law of man's life is to know, to love, and to serve the Being Who gave it him ; the Being Whose very existence has not dawned upon the most intelligent of the creatures below man. God wills that man should obey Him freely : that is, that he should be able to refuse obedience, and yet should obey. Thus man's consummate prerogative is necessarily linked to a fearful capacity for declining to exercise it. If man obeyed God only as a planet revolves, or only as a brute eats, he would not be man.

Now man's freedom is exercised in three main departments of his life : in his life as a social being, or his political life ; in his life as a thinking being, or his intellectual life ; and in his

<sup>1</sup> 1's. cxlviii. 6.

life as a moral being, or his spiritual life. In each of these departments of human activity Christ has made men free.

## I.

Christ has given to us men, first of all, political or social freedom. He has not indeed drawn out a scheme of government, and stamped it with His Divine authority, as guaranteeing freedom. We Englishmen rightly prize a Constitutional Monarchy as the best form of government, especially when it is recommended by the character of such a sovereign as our Queen. But while we cannot even entertain the idea of abandoning our own constitution for any other, we may admit that a citizen of the United States ought to feel himself as much at home amid the political doctrines of the New Testament as a subject of Her Majesty. The New Testament only notices two necessary elements of man's life as a political or social being. One is the existence of some government which it is a duty to obey ; be it assembly, president, king, or emperor. Each of these may be a higher power to which every soul is to be subject ; "because there is no power but of God : the powers that be are ordained of God."<sup>1</sup> The other element is the freedom of the individual Christian under any form of government whatever.

There had been something like freedom in the ancient heathen world : freedom for particular classes ; freedom for particular races ; freedom for the masters of conquered provinces ; freedom for the owners of thousands of slaves. The ruling race, or the ruling class, spoke, acted, much as it liked ; and jealously noted any attempt on the part of a more aspiring tyrant to destroy its liberty. This was an external rather than an inward, a political rather than a moral, liberty. It was the liberty of the few, the enslavement of the many. As it had no moral and internal basis, it was an accident rather than the spirit of the ancient world. And as political constitutions grew old, it died away into a tyranny. When our Lord came, all that could be called civilisation was under the sway of the Roman Cæsars. Yet with our Lord there came also the germs of political liberty. When individual men had learnt to feel the greatness and the interest of life ; the real horizon which stretches out before the soul's eye beyond the grave ; the depths of being within the soul ; its unexhausted capacities

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1.

for happiness and for suffering; the reality and nearness of God, of His Divine Son, of our fellow-citizens the blessed angels; the awful, inexpressible distinction of being redeemed from death by the Blood of the Most Holy, and sanctified by the Eternal Spirit;—it was impossible not to feel also that each man had, in the highest sense, rights to assert and a bearing to maintain. Thus a Christian was a free man, simply because he was a Christian. The political or social accidents of his position could not touch that unimpeded movement of his highest life in which his true freedom consisted.

It has often been alleged, and will have occurred to you, that, as a matter of fact, our Lord left the great despotisms of the world for a while untouched. Jesus Christ taught, He was crucified, He rose, He ascended. But the Cæsar Tiberius still sat upon the throne of the Roman world. There never was a more odious system of personal government than that of the Roman Emperors; the surviving forms of the extinct republic did but make the actual tyranny which had succeeded it more hard to bear. Yet it was of such an Emperor as Nero that St. Paul wrote, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; for there is no power but of God;"<sup>1</sup> and St. Peter, "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or unto governors," that is, proconsuls and prætors, as they were termed, "who are sent by him" into the provinces of the empire "for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well."<sup>2</sup> And in the same way Apostles advise Christian slaves to give obedience to their masters as unto the Lord; to obey, not with eye-service, as if they had only to do as much as might be insisted on by a jealous owner, but with singleness of heart, as men who throw every energy into their work.<sup>3</sup> It may be asked, How are such precepts, such advice as this, compatible with the assertion that Christ gave us political freedom? The answer is that He gave us a moral force which did two things. First, it made every Christian independent of outward political circumstances, and secondly, it made the creation of new civil institutions only a question of time. The slave who could not speak to a fellow-slave except when he was spoken to; who could not move as he would even once throughout the day; whose every look and gesture was regulated by an implacable etiquette; whose life

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiii. 1<sup>2</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 13, 14.<sup>3</sup> Eph. vi. 5-8; Col. iii. 22-24.

was, at least during long periods of Roman history, entirely at the disposal of his owner, was yet, if a Christian, inwardly free. He had a sense of freedom, of power, of living according to the higher law of his being, which the Cæsar on his throne knew not of. That was enough for him, at least for the present, if he knew his own happiness and the will of his Lord. By and by the moral seed which had been sown would bear fruit in his emancipation ; in new public institutions ; in a changed face of the world. For it was not our Lord's part, like that of some agitators of the time, to promote a rising among the slaves, to rouse a province into resistance against the Roman power, to issue programmes for a political and social revolution. That would have been at issue with the blessed lessons of submission, tenderness, long-suffering, charity, which He came to teach. But His doctrine of the worth and dignity of redeemed men was like leaven deposited in the corrupt mass of human society ; and in time the whole would be leavened politically, as in other ways.

The process has been advancing for centuries ; it is still going on. We English owe much to it ; more, perhaps, than any nation in the world. It has, indeed, been said that "if despotism in England ceased with the Stuarts, liberty is still confronted by the Statute-book." Of course it is. How could it be otherwise ? The objection assumes that between law and liberty there is some sort of necessary antagonism. We know unhappily that abroad this opposition is sometimes taken for granted. There are some countries in which order and liberty are treated as implacable enemies ; in which order is only secured by the confiscation of every personal liberty ; in which liberty only raises its head, if it does raise its head, amid the ruins of order and of law. We may well thank God that He has spared us these trials. When your Lordships worship in this temple of Christ,<sup>1</sup> you represent two great causes ; the sacred interests of liberty no less than the sacred interests of law. Law is the guarantee of liberty, not its enemy ; liberty is the enthusiastic ally of law. Each rests upon a fact which is Divine in its origin ; liberty on the moral majesty of individual human life ; law on our Divinely-implanted social instincts, and, as a consequence, on the Divine origin of society, and on the necessity of upholding and protecting society, by rule or law, against selfish passion. To

<sup>1</sup> Preached on occasion of the visit of the Judges to St. Paul's, April 21, 1872.



crush true liberty in the name of law is to sow the seed, sooner or later, of social insurrection. To depreciate or insult law in the name of liberty is to make of liberty a cloke of maliciousness, and to insure its ruin. Nothing can be more deplorable than any conflict between these sacred principles. An old psalmist, reviewing the tyrannical administration of law by the judges of Israel, exclaims that "all the foundations of the earth are out of course."<sup>1</sup> The whole social fabric totters to its base when there is a conflict between human law advocating order, and Divine law enthroned in conscience; when law and the highest liberty are foes. To avoid such a misfortune must be the aim of all wise legislators: to deprecate it the heart-felt prayer of all good citizens.

## II.

Christ gave men also intellectual freedom. He enfranchised them by the gift of truth. He gave truth in its fulness; truth not merely relative and provisional, but absolute and final. Until He came the human intellect was enslaved. It was enslaved either to degrading superstition, or to false and one-sided philosophies. Man must think about himself, his place in the universe, his destiny, his relation to a higher Being. And if he has not truth at hand, he makes the best he can of error. He may change "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man."<sup>2</sup> Still that is better than nothing. He may listen to a teacher, who, "promising him liberty, is all the while himself a servant of corruption."<sup>3</sup> Yet that is more endurable than utter silence. Man's interest in the great problems around him betrays him to his intellectual foes; unless he have embraced the Truth; unless the Truth, in its greatness, has made him free.

It is undeniable that the religion of Christ gave an immense impulse to human thought. It made men think as they had never thought before. It made them feel what it is to have within this puny body a spirit which takes the measure of the spheres. When Christ, in all the glory of His Godhead and His Manhood, had enthroned Himself in the soul, He taught men to think worthily of the greatness of God and of the greatness of man, notwithstanding man's weakness and corruption. He freed men from all the narrow, cramping influences of local philosophies, of local teachers, of petty schemes and theories

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxii. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. i. 23.

<sup>3</sup> 2 St. Pet. ii. 19.

for classes and races. He led men out into the great highways of thought, where, if they would, they might know the Universal Father, manifested in His Blessed Son, as the Author of all existence, as its Object, and as its End.

Here we are asked whether, as a matter of fact, Christianity does not cramp intellectual liberty by insisting upon the necessity of believing Christian doctrine; whether dogmatic Creeds, for instance, are not hostile to mental liberty.

Certainly our Lord has given us a body of Truth, which we can, if we like, reject, but which it is our happiness to believe. What He did for men in this way is embodied in His Own teaching, in the writings of His Apostles, and in the Creeds of the Universal Church. These are to intellectual liberty what law is to social liberty. They protect, they do not cramp it. They furnish a fixed point, from which thought may take wing. They do not enchain thought. If man would think steadily, fruitfully, he must begin with some solid, ascertained truth. You cannot survey the surface of the ocean while you are tossing upon its waves. You must plant your foot upon a rock in order to command, from a basis which is fixed, the scene which is perpetually shifting around you. To plunge off the rock into the waves is to surrender this vantage-ground. It is with the Creeds as with law. If you repudiate law, you may become the slaves of any individual will. If you repudiate the Creeds, you may become the slaves of any petty intellectual dogmatiser. In rejecting the Creeds you leave the broad, public highways of Christian Faith, the many-sided and comprehensive thought of the Universal Church, for the cramped and morbid speculations of individual thinkers. You abandon yourselves to all the petty tyrannies, to all the insolent usurpations, of private thought; to all the formulas of individual and human masters, from which Christ our Lord has willed to make us free.

If it would be a mistake to tear up Magna Charta in the supposed interests of freedom, because it recognises the obligation of law, it is also a mistake to mutilate or to disuse any Creed of the Universal Church, under the idea that you are securing mental liberty. The Creed does but state what every well-informed and faithful Christian wishes to believe. Christian doctrine, I repeat, is to man's highest life of thought what law is to his social life: to reject the one in the interests of the other is to turn mental liberty into a cloke of maliciousness.

## III.

Lastly, Christ has made men morally free. He has broken the chains which fettered the human will, and has restored to it its buoyancy and its power. Man was morally free in Paradise: he became enslaved, in consequence of that act of disobedience which we name the Fall. Man then forfeited the robe of grace which had secured the beauty and perfection of his nature in its earlier and happier stage; he could not transmit to his descendants that which he had lost himself. Man's will lost its spring, its superiority to circumstance, its independence of passion, its lofty unlikeness to mere instinct. Man fell more and more fatally under the dominion of nature; under the dominion of his senses enslaved by nature. He became by degrees what St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans,<sup>1</sup> describes him as having become. He was a slave; because the sovereign power within him, his will, had lost the secret of its freedom, and was itself enslaved.

How was he to be enfranchised? There came to him One Who said, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."<sup>2</sup> What had been lost was to be more than regained in Christ.<sup>3</sup> Not merely was the penalty of old transgressions to be paid so, that man was redeemed from a real captivity: but the will was to be reinvigorated by a heaven-sent force or grace, once more placing it in true harmony with the law of man's life. Of this St. Paul speaks in saying that when Christians were made free from sin they became the servants or slaves of righteousness.<sup>4</sup> There is no "Oregon territory" in the moral world; no tract of unoccupied neutral ground which runs between the frontiers of the empire of Christ and of the realm of Evil. They are conterminous to each other: and to have been rescued from the one is to become at once a subject of its antagonist.

Here it is objected that moral freedom is not worth having if it be only a service after all. 'You talk of freedom,' men say, 'but you mean rule. You mean restrictions upon action; restrictions upon inclination; restrictions upon speech. You mean obligations: obligations to work; obligations to self-discipline; obligations to sacrifice self to others; obligations to all the details of Christian duty.'

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 21-32.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. v. 16, 17.

<sup>2</sup> St. John viii. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. vi. 18.

My brethren, you are right : certainly we do. A Christian lives under a system of restrictions and obligations ; and yet he is free. Those obligations and restrictions only prescribe for him what his own new heaven-sent nature would wish to be and to do. They would be very annoying, no doubt, to the old nature which he has put off. They would exasperate what St. Paul calls "the old Adam, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts."<sup>1</sup> But they are acceptable to, they are demanded by, the "new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."<sup>2</sup>

Whatever a Christian may be outwardly, he is inwardly a free man. In obeying Christ's law he acts as he desires to act : he acts according to this, the highest law of his life, because he rejoices to do so. He obeys law ; the Law of God. But then he has no inclination to disobey it. To him, obedience is not a yoke. Disobedience would be a torture. His inclinations are in accordance with his highest duty : that which emancipates him is itself a law. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death."<sup>3</sup> He is, as St. Peter says to us to-day, a servant of God ;<sup>4</sup> but then, as he would not for all the world be anything else, his service is perfect freedom.

The Antinomian plea that the rules and laws of a Christian life are an infringement upon Christian liberty is only a way of making Christian liberty a cloke of maliciousness. The care of conscience, regular habits of devotion, system in doing good to others, and in the disposal of time, caution as to what passes in conversation, avoidance of bad company, precautions against temptation ;—these things are represented as inconsistent with freedom. Inconsistent they are with mere natural impetuosity, with a purely animal impatience of restraint, with that notion of human liberty which places it in the indulgence of the lower instincts and desires at the cost of the higher. True freedom, let us be sure, consists in the power of acting without hindrance according to the highest law of our being. To do wrong does not assert our liberty. It degrades, it enslaves us. It may have been necessary that we should have the power of doing wrong, in order to do right freely. But none the less we forfeit freedom, if we do aught but right. A man is not really more free because he steals, because he swears, because he murders. This false notion of liberty is

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 2.

<sup>4</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 16.

its worst enemy. Our highest liberty is secured by our free and complete obedience to every detail of God's eternal law.

Brethren, let us look up to our Great Emancipator. Our freedom is after all His gift: but He has left us the power, the perilous power, of forfeiting it, that we may, if we will, retain it for His glory. Let us see that we do not forfeit it by cloaking under it the "maliciousness" which repudiates law. The laws of the land protect our social liberty. The Laws of the Church, the laws of natural and revealed Truth, protect our mental liberty. The Moral Laws of God protect our spiritual liberty. All true law meets in, radiates from, the Divine Person of Christ, the Everlasting Legislator, our Deliverer from political, intellectual, moral slavery.

If we repudiate law we turn His gift of freedom against Himself. If, through our willing obedience, we find in law the very countersign of our freedom, we are—and in this way only can we be—free indeed.

## SERMON XXXIII.

### JESUS THE ONLY SAVIOUR OF MEN.<sup>1</sup>

I COR. I. 13.

*Was Paul crucified for you?*

CERTAINLY this question was intended to startle St. Paul's readers at Corinth; and, no doubt, it did startle them. He is writing them a letter by way of answer to their inquiries; and he suddenly stops to ask them whether he, the writer, had been crucified for them. What was it that provoked him to use language so strange and paradoxical?

St. Paul had been told on good authority that after his leaving Corinth the Church in that place had been split up into separate groups; and that these groups named themselves, one after himself, another after the Alexandrian teacher Apollos, another after the great Apostle St. Peter, and a fourth even after Christ our Lord. These names would have represented ideas which ought never to be separated, and which in the present day we should call respectively Christian freedom, Christian philosophy, Church authority and organisation, and personal devotion to Christ. But the Corinthians were Greeks, and they had carried some of their old mental habits with them out of heathenism into the Church of God. For ages the Greeks had identified each shade of opinion in philosophy with the name of an individual teacher. It was natural for them to look at Christianity itself mainly as an addition to the existing stock of thought in the world, which admitted of being treated as other systems which had preceded it had been treated. Moreover, it was true in the Apostolic age—as now, and always,—that Religion is differently apprehended and pre-

<sup>1</sup> Preached at St Paul's for the Bishop of London's Fund, April 25, 1880.



sented by different minds. But to dwell on different aspects of the one Truth is one thing, and to hold contradictory beliefs is another. To-day, on the festival of an Evangelist,<sup>1</sup> we are naturally reminded how differently our Blessed Lord's Life presented itself to His four biographers : as the fulfilment of prophecy, as the Life of the Ideal or Perfect Man, as the cure for human sin, and as the manifestation in the flesh of the Eternal Son of God. And in like manner to St. Peter the Christian Religion and Church appeared chiefly as a continuation of the Jewish, with some vitally important differences ; to St. Paul, as the absolute reconciliation between God and man, intended to embrace all the nations of the world ; to Apollos, as the solution of those many serious questions about human life and destiny which had been asked by human philosophy. The Life which the four Evangelists described was one. The doctrine which Peter and Paul and Apollos preached was one. But different aspects of the Life and of the doctrine recommended themselves to different minds. Thus in the teaching of the Apostles, as in the Gospel narratives, there was an apparent diversity grouped around a substantial harmony ; a harmony inspired by the Truth so variously apprehended and described. The history of England is not less a single history, because one writer mainly addresses himself to the story of the monarchy, and another to the social and material condition and development of the people, and another to our relations in different ages with foreign countries, and a fourth to the successive phases of art or of literature.

The fault then of the Corinthians lay in their treating a difference in the way of presenting religious truth as if it were a difference in religious truth itself. To them Paul, Peter, and Apollos were the teachers of distinct religions. Nay more, the holiest Name of all was bandied about among the names of these His servants and messengers ; just as if all truth did not centre in Him as its Source and Object ; just as if He too could be appropriated by a little clique, who prided themselves, no doubt, on not being party men, while they thus used the saving Name to cover the narrowest of the forms of Corinthian partisanship. Surely to St. Paul this degradation of our Divine Master's Name must have been unspeakably distressing ; only less distressing, perhaps, than the position of virtual equality with Christ assigned to himself ; as though he, an Apostle, were the centre and author of a distinct

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark

religion ! Hence the pain which he feels, and which finds vent in the question, "Was Paul crucified for you ?"

## I.

St. Paul's question suggests first of all the difference between the debt which Christians owe to our Lord Jesus Christ and that which they owe to any, even the most favoured and illuminated, of His servants. And certainly it was no slight debt which the Corinthians owed to the Apostle. He had preached the Faith and had planted the Church of Christ among them. Some of them had been Jews before their conversion, and to these he had taught the true end of their law, the true meaning of their prophecies, the true scope of their sacrificial worship. He had taught them how in Christ they could assuredly find all that they had sought in vain in the religion of Moses. But the Corinthian Christians generally were converts from heathenism. As such they owed St. Paul a much larger debt of obligation than did the converts from Judaism. He had taught them, not only the truths which Christians believe and which Jews reject, but also the truths which Jews and Christians hold in common, and which heathens reject. These once heathen Corinthians had learnt from St. Paul, not merely that Christ, the true Messiah, and the Lord from heaven, had come in our flesh to save mankind from spiritual ruin, by His Death upon the Cross, and His gift of the Holy Spirit, but also that God is One, that He is Almighty, All-wise, and All-good, that He is the Creator of heaven and earth, and that the heathen religions contained, at the very best, small detached fragments of truth about Him, buried beneath a mass of error and folly. In short, the Corinthian Christians as a body owed to St. Paul the truth they knew about subjects of the highest interest to man ; about man's nature, about God's Nature, about God's relations with man, about the Eternal Future. It was, to say the least, a vast obligation ; it was a debt which could never be repaid. But the Apostle suggests its utter relative insignificance by his question, "Was Paul crucified for you ?"

Not that St. Paul had taught the Corinthians the Faith of Christ without suffering. At Corinth, as elsewhere, he preached "with much contention,"<sup>1</sup> nay, not seldom with his life in his hand. With the arrival of Timothy and Silas from

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. ii. 2.

Macedonia, the first efforts in the house of Aquila and the synagogue, the quiet days of the Corinthian mission came to an end. St. Paul felt it a duty to put our Lord's claims more distinctly forward in the synagogue than he had done at first. He "was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ."<sup>1</sup> The result was an outbreak of violent fanaticism; St. Luke calls it "blasphemy."<sup>2</sup> The Apostle left the synagogue with the exclamation that the blood of his opponents was on their own heads, and that henceforth he turned to the heathen. This was followed by a great Jewish riot, after which he was brought before the tribunal of Gallio.<sup>3</sup> The preaching of the Gospel then had involved sacrifice and suffering; the suffering and sacrifice which in some shape or other is inseparable from any serious effort on behalf of Truth in a world which openly rejects or secretly dislikes it. But all such sufferings had differed in kind from that which was glanced at by the question, "Was Paul crucified for you?"

Yes! let me repeat it, in that question St. Paul implies that his work differed from that of his Redeemer, not merely in degree, but in kind. The relation of the Apostle to Christ our Lord was altogether unlike that which ever existed or could exist between the pupils of a great human teacher and their master. One fine day a man like Socrates appears on the stage of history. He teaches some truths which are new to his generation, or he teaches some old truths in a striking and original way. He sets everybody thinking. He founds a school. His work, or some part of it, is taken up by his pupils according to their ability. This or that pupil adds a touch of subdued originality which saves his own performance from being merely a repetition. But, in the main, it is the master's teaching which is continued until a new system takes its place. Here from first to last the master and his successors are on a virtual level. They are all alike teachers. If they teach any truth, they teach something which is independent of all of them. It might have been taught just as well by some one else. And if in the end the master drinks a cup of hemlock, it may show his belief in the value of some of his speculations, or the fickleness or injustice of his fellow-citizens. In no other sense could it be of any importance either to his pupils or to mankind.

When St. Paul asks, "Was Paul crucified for you?" he implies how utterly different was his own relation to Jesus

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 5.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 6.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 12-17.

Christ from that of his great pupils to Socrates. For St. Paul did not think of Christ our Lord only or chiefly as a great Teacher whose work he had continued, after the fashion of a second Plato, in a way peculiarly his own. To St. Paul Christ was not merely the Author of Christianity, but its Subject and its Substance. Christianity is not, as Lessing maintained, only what Christ Himself taught. It is also the Apostles' teaching about Christ; it is the true account of the work and the Person of Christ. Not merely what He said while He was on earth, but what He did and suffered, and Who He is, that His sufferings and acts should be invested with a transcendent interest;—all this is of the essence and heart of the Christian Faith. And hence the immense significance of the Apostle's question. St. Paul was not indeed crucified; he was beheaded some years later, as a martyr for Christ. But excepting the testimony which he thus bore to the truth which he preached, his death was without results to the Roman Christians, and to the world. He was beheaded for no one. And had he been crucified at Corinth, the sin of no single Corinthian would have been washed away by his blood; no one soul would have been placed in a new relation with God by his sufferings. Do, teach, or suffer what he might, he was but a disciple. Such was the difference between the Master of Christians and His greatest disciples, that it made their work differ, not in degree, but in kind.

## II.

And St. Paul's question suggests, further, what it was in the work of Christ our Lord which, in the Apostle's judgment, had the first claim on the gratitude of Christians.

It was not His miracles. They were designed, no doubt, to make faith in His Divine mission natural and easy. They were more frequently works of mercy than works of conspicuous power. They were acted parables. Each of them revealed something respecting the nature of Christ's work and His kingdom. But others also have worked miracles. And the miracles of Christ our Lord have not touched the heart of the world more than His Words.

Was it then His teaching? Certainly when He was on earth men wondered at the gracious Words which proceeded out of His Mouth. Even in our own day some who reject His miracles profess to be devoted to His teaching. Nor will

human speech ever say more to the conscience of man than did the Sermon on the Mount, or more to the heart of man than did the Discourse in the Supper-Room. Yet He Himself implies that what He did would have greater claims on man than what He said. And the history of Christendom certainly confirms this.

Was it then His triumph over death at His Resurrection? Certainly the Resurrection was the supreme certificate of His Divine Mission: it was the warrant of faith to which the Apostles appealed. But the claim of the Resurrection upon our gratitude is so great, because it is intimately bound up with the tragedy which had preceded it, and of which it is at once the reversal and the interpretation.

"I determined," says the Apostle, "not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."<sup>1</sup> "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>2</sup> "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God."<sup>3</sup> We see now what is meant by the question, Was Paul crucified for you?

Yes! on the Cross Jesus our Lord speaks to the heart of man, more persuasively than when working His miracles, or when teaching multitudes or His disciples, or when rising from His tomb. On the Cross He reminds us of our utter misery and helplessness until we are aided by His redeeming Might. On the Cross He reveals the astonishing love for each single soul, which drew Him from His throne of glory to a life of humiliation, and a death of pain and shame. On the Cross He is still preaching as on the Mount and in the Supper-Room; but it is in the more cogent language of action. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."<sup>4</sup> On the Cross He bears our sins in His Own body:<sup>5</sup> He is made sin for us Who knew no sin:<sup>6</sup> He is washing us from our sins in His Own Blood.<sup>7</sup> As He hangs on the Cross before the eye of faith, St. Paul points to a Propitiation for sin,<sup>8</sup> a Redemption from sin,<sup>9</sup> and a Reconciliation with the Father.<sup>10</sup> To expand, connect, explain, justify, these aspects of His Atoning Death is no doubt a labour of vast proportions. But

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 2.<sup>2</sup> Gal. vi. 14.<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.<sup>4</sup> St. John xv. 13.<sup>5</sup> 1 St. Pet. ii. 24.<sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. v. 21.<sup>7</sup> Rev. i. 5.<sup>8</sup> Rom. iii. 25.<sup>9</sup> Eph. i. 7.<sup>10</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18-20; Heb. ii. 17.



in their simple form they meet every child who reads the New Testament, and they explain the hold of Christ Crucified on the Christian heart. The Crucifixion means more for the Christian believer than any other event in the whole history of the world, or even in the Life of Jesus Christ our Lord. And we understand the pathos and the strength of the appeal, "Was Paul crucified for you?"

### III.

And thus at the present day St. Paul's question enables us to measure the true worth of efforts for improving the condition of mankind.

In our age, it has been said, a larger proportion of human beings than ever before are engaged in doing good of some kind for their fellow-creatures. Certainly philanthropists of all types are hard at work, sometimes more earnestly than wisely, but always, or almost always, so as to command respect. Charity is organised; drainage is carried out; suffering of all sorts is alleviated; nearly every leading disease has its separate hospital, or at least its special students and remedies. The blind, the deaf, the dumb, the consumptive, the victims of cancer or of dropsy, the convalescent, the incurable, the orphans, the foundlings, the idiots, are each provided for, and sometimes on a scale of splendid generosity. We may well thank God that He has put it into the hearts of so many of our countrymen to found and to support institutions and enterprises so rich in their practical benevolence. But when it is hinted that efforts of this kind satisfy all the needs of man, we are obliged to hesitate. The needs of the soul are at least as real as those of the body. The pain of the conscience is at least as torturing as that of the nerves. The Invisible World is not less to be provided for than the world of sense and time. We are sometimes almost pressed, in view of the exaggerated claims of a secular philanthropy, to ask whether this or that benevolent person was crucified for the poor or the suffering, who are relieved by his money, or by his skill.

In like manner, when somebody<sup>1</sup> comes forward to tell us, in a more refined, if less forcible, tongue than our own, that we should all be much better if we would give increased time and thought to the Emperor Marcus Aurelius, we naturally listen.

That Marcus Aurelius was, for a pagan emperor, more than

<sup>1</sup> M. Renan.



respectable ; that there are many fine and true things in his book of *Thoughts* ; that his life was marked by excellences which were, in his day, and especially in his position, eminent, must be frankly granted. But when we are told that his book is an everlasting gospel, and when he is spoken of in terms which suggest a comparison only less absurd than it is irreverent, we look around us. Surely, we say, literary infidelity has done this man a wrong by the very excesses of its panegyric. For we cannot but ask whether the characteristic virtue of himself and of his sect was more than the social luxury of a very select and fastidious clique ; whether it had the slightest effect upon the indescribable degradations of the multitudes who lived close to the gates of his palace ; whether it prevented the imperial philosopher from associating with himself in the government of the empire a worthless trifler, or from deliberately bequeathing his responsibilities to a profligate buffoon, who inflicted great miseries on mankind ; whether it even suggested a scruple respecting his cruel persecutions of the one Religion that could make mankind at large love, if they did not practise, disinterested virtue. These are questions which history may be left to answer. And her judgment would make another question only more grotesque than profane—"Was Marcus Aurelius crucified for you ?"

Yes ; only One ever was crucified out of love to sinners, and with a will and power to save them. And it is in order to bring hundreds of thousands in this great city within the reach of His Redemption that I am hoping to interest you to-day on behalf of the Bishop of London's Fund. Perhaps the Bishop of London's Fund labours under a certain disadvantage on the score of its name, which at first suggests a financial rather than a religious enterprise. Yet it would be difficult to propose a substitute. The descriptions of religious work which it furthers are very various ; and no one of these could be employed to describe it without giving the impression that its field of operations is much narrower than it really is. Thus it supports missionary clergy and lay agents ; it builds houses for clergymen, schools, mission buildings, of various descriptions ; it lends a helping hand to the erection and endowment of permanent churches, and to any special objects which may appear to our Bishop to be likely to promote religion in his diocese. What are these agencies but the material and outward aspect of that preaching of Christ Crucified, which now, as in St. Paul's days, is the one great remedy for human misery and sin ?

To say that all the undertakings which this Fund supports are equally efficient, that all the workmen in its employ are equally masters of their heavenly craft, would be to overstate the case. No doubt, here and there we should find less activity, less perfect teaching of Christian truth, than elsewhere. But it would be unworthy of a generous and Christian temper to refuse support to what is in its conception, and on the whole, a very noble undertaking, on the ground of any such incidental shortcoming or failure. As a whole the agencies supported by this Fund do actively promote the knowledge of Christ Crucified. They bring the Christian Faith and Church within the reach of thousands who else would be ignorant of them. They thus reduce the area of accumulated ungodliness which covers so large a portion of this great capital.

Those who wish to see in detail what the Fund has done during the past year should obtain a copy of the Report. A study of this will show how extensive and how various are its operations, and yet how far short it falls of meeting the ever-increasing needs of London.

The yearly increase of population in this metropolis, accelerated as it has been during the last thirty years by the centralising influence of the railway system, keeps constantly in advance of the Church's efforts to overtake it. Nay, rather, it outruns the labours of all the Christian bodies put together. During the year 1879 twenty thousand new houses have been built in the suburbs of London; the largest number that has ever been returned. This represents a possible increase of 120,000 inhabitants, that is to say, of a population nearly rivalling that of Bristol, and more than three times as large as that of Oxford. What, think you, will happen, in this world, and in the next, if this new city—for such it is—be left to fester in the mental and moral misery which is inseparable from such an accumulation of human lives?

Within the last fortnight a great deal has been said and written about the social dangers which attend on the advance of Democracy. Without at all indorsing much of this language, we may recall the saying of a shrewd observer of human nature,<sup>1</sup> to the effect that where civil liberty exists in anything like perfection, order can only be secured by one of two agencies; by principle or by force. If there is no principle enshrined in the hearts of men, then selfishness, rapacity, excesses of every description, will break out in private and public conduct, until

<sup>1</sup> Montesquieu.

at last, in order to defend society against the perils which threaten it, government has to be strengthened by being furnished with the means of repressing disorder and crime. In the hands of any unscrupulous government this increase of strength may easily be turned against the existence of liberty itself. There is but a short step from social anarchy to the appearance of a so-called "saviour of society;" an adventurer who confiscates personal liberty, nominally in the interests of order, but really in the interests of some kind of selfish despotism. In a free community, therefore, the aim of a wise foresight will always be to secure order by the means of generally recognised principle; since, in such proportion as principle is diminished, you increase the need of force. But, if you set aside the Faith of Christ, what influence is to supply principle on such a scale as to secure society against the solvents which are ever latent in human selfishness? What do you seriously suppose will happen to the social life of vast communities, such as those which are added year by year to London, if it should come to be generally believed that the solemn truths which religion holds up before the eyes of every class in the community may be dispensed with?

"Once let it be supposed," says an American who cannot be suspected of tenderness towards Christian orthodoxy, "once let men thoroughly believe that they are the work and sport of chance, that no superior intelligence concerns itself with human affairs, that all human improvements perish for ever at death, that the weak have no guardian and the injured no avenger, that there is no recompence for sacrifices to uprightness and the public good, that an oath is unheard in heaven, that secret crimes have no witness but the perpetrator, that human existence has no purpose, and human virtue no unfailing friend, that this brief life is everything to us, and death is total, everlasting extinction,—once let men thoroughly abandon religion, and who can conceive or describe the extent of the social desolation that would follow? We hope perhaps," he adds, "that human laws and natural sympathy would hold society together. As reasonably might we believe that were the sun quenched in the heavens our torches could illuminate and our fires quicken and fertilise the earth."<sup>1</sup>

The faith which St. Paul preached, the faith in Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God manifest in our flesh and crucified for the sins of man, does, when sincerely received, protect society

<sup>1</sup> Channing, *Theol. Works*, p. 332.

against those dangers which are inseparable from human progress at certain stages of its development. For this faith in Christ Crucified addresses itself to each of those poles of society, which, when left to the ordinary selfish impulses of human nature, tend to become separate and antagonistic. To the wealthy, to the noble, to the fastidious, the figure of the Crucified Saviour is a perpetual preacher of self-sacrifice for the sake of the poor and needy ; He enjoins the surrender of income, and prejudices, and time, and tastes, for a cause which is His Own. And to the poor, the desolate, the unfriended, the figure of the Crucified is no less a perpetual lesson of patience under wrong, specially under undeserved wrong ; on the Cross Christ teaches men more persuasively than any other the beauty, the majesty of entire resignation. Thus does the truth which is at the very heart of the Christian Creed contribute most powerfully to the coherence and wellbeing of society ; and we live in days when society is not able to dispense with its assistance. Not that the preservation of society will be a Christian's strongest motive for helping forward a work like this. For us Eternity is of more account than time ; and the Day of Judgment than any possible event that can precede it ; and the endless existence of souls, in this or that condition, beyond the grave, than any established order of society here and now.

As we walk down the new streets which are being raised in every suburb of London, without any spiritual provision to meet their needs, let us ask ourselves, what will be the condition of their present inhabitants fifty or a hundred years hence ? If we have any true Christian feeling, the answer to that question must bid us assist, as we may, this effort to spread the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ in this diocese. And there are three ways in which, in whatever degree, every one here present can lend a hand to this great work. The first is to give of what God has given us, such a portion as we can dare to offer before Him, towards a work for the promotion of which all London Christians are surely responsible ; since God has appointed them, more than other men, to do it. Give something that you will really miss ; give it for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord, if you would have your gift accepted on high. The second is to take and show an interest in the work, and to get others to do so ; to give the help of prayer and sympathy when you can do no more : to welcome any opportunity of making it known to those who can effectively

promote it. And the third is to remember that all efforts to advance Christ's kingdom impose a serious responsibility upon those who make them ; the responsibility of being consistent. Our first labour for any religious truth, as we know, should be within ourselves. When this has been carried out quietly, unostentatiously, thoroughly, as at the foot of the Cross of Jesus our Lord, we shall be more than ever anxious to do what we may, in our day and generation, to enable others to share the blessings which we here enjoy, that they may partake in these joys, to which, as we trust, the Eternal Mercy will admit us, hereafter.



## SERMON XXXIV.

### THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION.

ST. MATT. XXVIII. 18-20.

*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you : and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

THESE sublime words, with which St. Matthew closes his Gospel, have for us to-day a twofold attraction. On the one hand, they are among the most significant of those sayings, which, uttered by our Lord in the course of the forty days after His rising from the dead, invite particular consideration during the Easter season. On the other hand, as the Collect which was used in this evening service will have reminded us, to-morrow is the festival of the Apostles St. Philip and St. James : and these are the words in which our Lord completed the endowments with which He invested His Apostles before He left the earth. As, when instituting the Holy Sacrament of His Body and Blood, before He suffered, He bade them “Do this as a Memorial of Me ;”<sup>1</sup> as after His rising from the dead, in the Upper Chamber, He breathed on them, saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost ; whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them ;”<sup>2</sup> so now, before He leaves the world, He gives them a world-wide commission, to make disciples and to baptize : ‘Go, make Christians of all the nations, baptizing them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost : teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you : and lo, I am with you all the days, even unto the end of the world.’

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> St. John xx. 22, 23.



And before giving this last commission, our Lord makes an announcement: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on the earth." To His Human Nature this authority was a gift. It had been given at His Incarnation; and at His Resurrection He had as Man entered fully upon its practical possession. But the point of what He is saying lies not in the source or transfer of this authority, but in its character and range. As Man, so we Christians believe, He has authority in heaven; authority to place Himself at the right hand of the Father; to send down the Holy Spirit upon the earth; and to draw upwards to Himself His living members, and bid them reign with Him. Henceforth no principalities or powers in the world of spirits may defy or disown His all-pervading sway. And as Man He has authority on the earth, to complete the foundation of His Church as a kingdom of souls; to protect, to cleanse, to extend, to perpetuate it; to bring the nations, one by one, into its fold; to convert sinners, to sanctify souls, to prepare men for that solemn moment when He will come again to judge the living and the dead, and to render to every man according to his works. "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on the earth."

Such is the announcement. And then follows the practical consequence. It has been doubted, I do not say with any great reason, whether our Lord used the one word translated by "therefore." But there is no room for question as to the connection of the thought. Because He wields all authority on the earth and in heaven, He bids the Apostles convert, baptize, instruct, all the nations of the world; relying on His Presence with them to the end of time. In every word of this commission we feel the authority of the Speaker; and with this aspect of the words in view we will go on to consider them in detail.

## I.

Let us notice first of all the substance of this commission. What was it that the Apostles had to do?

They were to make disciples of all the nations, and they were to do this by baptizing them into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and by teaching them to observe all the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Name into which the nations were to be baptized was itself a revelation of the Inner Being of God. The rite of Baptism, as our Lord

had instructed Nicodemus,<sup>1</sup> was much more than a ceremony by which admission was to be given into a new religious society : it was the instrument by which the Holy Spirit would deposit in the soul the germ of a new life. And the baptized nations were to be taught to observe or to guard all that Christ had commanded His first followers to believe and do. All that He had taught directly Himself, all that He would teach indirectly by the Apostles, when the Spirit had come to guide them into all truth, was to be enjoined on the new disciples to the end of time. As He said of Himself, "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness,"<sup>2</sup> so He said to His Apostles, "He that heareth you, heareth Me."<sup>3</sup>

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." We cannot fail to note here the consciousness of a plenary authority. The Speaker does not propose ; He commands. He does not argue. He has decided.

It has not been uncommon to compare the Utterer of these words with Socrates. Socrates, as we know, was a celebrated Athenian, who employed his time in endeavouring to make his countrymen think. Looking at the torpid, stagnant condition of the minds of the majority of men, and at their way of mistaking prejudice for wisdom, or a command of phrases for an acquaintance with things, Socrates set himself to cross-question them in a manner which was possible in such a society as that of Athens then was. And he certainly produced some great results. He made men think ; and out of their thoughts arose, in another generation, philosophies, which have never since ceased to interest the world. Socrates made men think ; but he could not do more. He could not discover any such truth to them as would satisfy the yearnings of aroused thought. And, after all, thinking is not an end in itself, any more than walking or eating is an end in itself. We walk in order to promote health, or to reach a particular spot ; we eat that we may support bodily strength ; and we think, if we do think, that we may by thinking arrive, if we can, at truth, or at something that leads to it. Socrates could set men thinking. But he could not satisfy thought : he was perfectly alive to his failure to do so. The authority of Socrates was, in its way, great : he towered far above any of his contemporaries. But it was a relative authority ; it was bound up with the state of things in Athens at that time. For Socrates his fellow-citizens

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 3-13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. viii. 12.

<sup>3</sup> St. Luke x. 16.

alone were, practically, his fellow-men : his notion of virtue was that it consisted in the public conduct of a good citizen. All moral obligations were discharged, as he thought, if the laws of Athens were obeyed. He saw no harm in conquering an enemy by injuring him ; or in advising a courtesan, like Theodota, how to display herself to the best advantage. However he might make men think, he was himself an ordinary man, and he had nothing to say that could permanently satisfy conscience. He did not, in the gravest matters, rise above the standard of his day and country. In perpetually cross-questioning men, he was like a farmer who should break up his fallow ground, yet have nothing to sow in it ; so labouring for a harvest which would not in the event reward his pains.

Here then we see the difference between Socrates and our Lord : it is the difference between earth and heaven. Certainly our Lord did also rouse the minds and consciences of men, by forcing them to think steadily on familiar but uncomprehended truths, on obvious but neglected duties. Witness His conversations with Nicodemus,<sup>1</sup> with the woman of Samaria,<sup>2</sup> with Simon the Pharisee.<sup>3</sup> But then He did not arouse thought and conscience only to let them die back presently into disappointment, or despair, or even into forgetfulness and stagnation. He aroused them, and forthwith presented them with an adequate object ; with His Own clear instructions ; with Himself. Never, for one moment, is His moral and religious horizon bounded by the narrow requirements of public law, or by the conventional opinions of the men of His day : He rises above these petty and perishing standards with a majestic decision into an atmosphere where criticism is too impossible, to await rebuke : He exhibits an ideal of life which will awe the human conscience to the end of time, since in His case it is at once taught and lived. "I am the Light of the world."<sup>4</sup> "Come unto Me, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you."<sup>5</sup> "For no man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."<sup>6</sup> And therefore the Apostles were not to cross-question the nations, but to tell them a higher truth than any thinking that could be stimulated by cross-questioning could possibly lead them to. They were to teach everything in the sphere of thought, or in the sphere of practice, which Jesus had commanded in terms

<sup>1</sup> St. John iii. 1-21.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 6-26.<sup>3</sup> St. Luke vii. 36-47.<sup>4</sup> St. John viii. 12.<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. xi. 28.<sup>6</sup> Ibid. 27.

or by implication. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."

This is not the least noteworthy feature of our Lord's Words, that He does not foresee a time or circumstances when any part of His teaching will become antiquated or untrue, inappropriate or needless. Some of us may know what it is to be reminded of a conversation in bygone days; to stumble upon an old letter, or upon a diary, which we wrote years ago. We have almost lost the clue to the state of mind which led us so to express ourselves then; we find this remark trivial, that a platitude, another of questionable accuracy, a fourth wanting in what now seems to us to be good feeling or good taste. The document is perhaps pervaded by an impulsiveness which we think absurd, or by a want of heart which shames us. It even appears to us that we have so changed, it may or may not be for the better, that we can with difficulty believe ourselves to have uttered the reported words, or to have written the lines before us. And one or two such experiences as this makes us distrust what we say or write now, and to reflect that a time may come, whether in this life or in another state of existence, when we shall regard what we now put forward with unhesitating confidence, as entitled to very scant attention. For in truth, brethren, we men are, at our best, always learning, always revising, correcting, supplementing what we have learnt heretofore; never able to express ourselves positively on subjects which deeply interest us, without feeling that hereafter we, or others, will trace shortcomings, or exaggerations, or elements of paradox or falsehood, in what we say. Our Lord is haunted by no such apprehension as this. He is confident that what He has taught His disciples will hold good for all time; for all races and classes of men; for characters, moods of thought, moral and intellectual atmospheres the most diverse. As He said, "My word shall not pass away,"<sup>1</sup> so now He fearlessly bids His Apostles teach the nations "whatsoever I have commanded you." He reigns, alike in the moral and the intellectual world; and He is certain of the authority of the commission which He gives to teach.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxiv. 35.

## II.

Secondly, let us observe the range of this commission. It was to embrace all the nations of the world. "Go ye, make disciples of all the nations." This command must appear, when we consider it, to be simply astonishing. Here is, as it seems, a Jewish peasant, surrounded by a small company of uneducated followers, bidding them address themselves in His Name to races, ancient, powerful, refined; to win their intellectual and moral submission to doctrines and precepts propounded by Himself. "Go, make disciples of all nations." The only idea of empire of which the world knew was the empire of material force. Wherever the legions of Rome had penetrated, there followed the judge and the tax-collector: and the nations submitted to what they could not resist, until at length their masters became too weak to control or to protect them. As for an empire of souls, the notion was unheard of. No philosopher could found it, since a philosopher's usual occupation consisted mainly in making intellectual war upon his predecessors or contemporaries. No existing religion could aim at it, since the existing religions were believed to be merely the products of national instincts and aspirations; each religion was part of the furniture of a nation, or at most of a race. Celsus, looking out on Christianity in the second century of our era, with the feelings of Gibbon or of Voltaire, said that a man must be out of his mind to think that Greeks and Barbarians, Romans and Scythians, bondmen and freemen, could ever have one religion. Nevertheless this was the purpose of our Lord. The Apostles were bidden to go and make disciples of all the nations. Yes; all the nations. There was no nation in such religious circumstances, none so cultivated, none so degraded, as to be able to dispense with the teaching and healing power of Jesus Christ, or to be beyond the reach of His salvation.

a. Take the Jewish people; the race to which our Lord Himself and His Apostles belonged. The Jewish nation, not less than others, was to be taught by Christ's Apostles; nay, it had a first claim upon their time and labour. This claim our Lord Himself had already, in fact, acknowledged and satisfied. Yet the Jewish nation and religion stood upon a very different footing from all others in the world. The Jewish



religion had come from heaven ; and the Jewish nation was a Church. The Jewish Church was an imperfectly organised Church, and the Jewish revelation was but a guide to a higher Revelation that was to follow it. But still they were both of God, in a sense which is not true of any other nation or religion in the world. We may sometimes read of attempts made by able men in foreign countries or at home to obliterate this distinction ; to represent the worship of Jehovah and the religious institutes of Israel as not very different from those of the deities and nations around. But such negative critics may themselves remind us of a story which is not inopportune, when everybody is still thinking of the late Mr. Darwin. One day two gentlemen visited the site of the old Roman city of Silchester. The accomplished antiquarian, who until lately used to show strangers over the ground, to their great advantage and enjoyment, observed that on this occasion his visitors paid but scant attention to what he had to tell them. He discoursed about the streets, the public buildings, the private houses, the general physiognomy, and the special points of interest in the place ; but they were, he said, entirely absorbed in examining the proceedings of earthworms. Earthworms are of course to be found elsewhere than on the site of Silchester ; they are to be found where there is nothing of great human and historic interest in the immediate neighbourhood : but these visitors, who were working for the great naturalist, were engaged in discovering what earthworms could do in a long course of centuries to bury out of sight the remains of an ancient city. Now the modern negative critics might seem not seldom to visit the Old Testament in a similar spirit ; they have some one subject of secular interest in view to the exclusion of all others ; they discuss the chronology, or the age of documents said to be cited or used by the sacred writers, or the successive phases of the Hebrew language, or the traces of historical events which have been lost sight of or unrecognised. Of what they say, some things may be true, and some things false. But rarely or never have they an eye for the real interest of the literature which they attempt to discuss ; for its true heights and depths in the world of conscience and of spiritual things ; for its moral and religious, as distinct from its external, secular, or literary interest. In these matters we men find, generally speaking, just what we seek. If we are in quest of heavenly things, the veil is lifted, and they are disclosed to us ; if only for what belongs to this world, it is



ready to our hand, and we get what we look for. These negative critics are on the site of a diviner Silchester, yet looking only for earthworms ; and it is not surprising if they should leave with an impression that the field which they explore is like any other field in the world. We need not be alarmed if they tell us that the Old Testament history only resembles other ancient histories ; their report on the subject can hardly be deemed decisive.

No ! Israel would never have been what it has been to the human race, unless its religious annals had been altogether unique ; unless it had been flooded with a light which was not given elsewhere. For Israel was especially the people of religion, the people of Revelation : although its Revelation was only partial, and in our Lord's day its practical religion had wellnigh shrunk to the proportions of an outward form. And therefore, if the command had run, "Go, teach the Jewish people," it would have been a very bold command. For all the conditions of success were wanting, apparently, to the Apostles ; social distinction, learning, political weight, familiarity with the methods by which influence is won and held ; while these things belonged to the classes which were decisively opposed to Jesus of Nazareth. Yet no exception is made. Or rather, Israel is to have a first claim<sup>1</sup> upon the missionaries who are sent forth with the commission, "Go, make disciples of all the nations."

*β.* It may indeed be said that the Apostles and the mass of the Jewish people would find a common ground, in the Mosaic Law, in the theocratic sense of all Jews, in the instinct of race ; an instinct of extraordinary power in the instance before us. All this the Apostles had to fall back upon, so long as they confined their labours to their own countrymen. And they might have reflected that, in past days, some men, of no social weight or consideration whatever, of no learning, of no standing in the State, or in the priestly or prophetic order, had yet exercised the greatest influence upon the destinies of Israel. The peasants of Galilee might at least be to their generation what Amos had been to his : and if the task was difficult and dangerous, it was not, at least, utterly paradoxical.

But the command runs, "Go, make disciples of all the nations." The great peoples of the world knew nothing of the historical and religious past of Israel, or knew only enough

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 47.

to feel for them an unconcealed aversion and contempt. Think how our Lord's instructions to the Apostles would have been regarded by an educated Greek of the time. Greece was the home of scientific and artistic culture. She lost her political freedom when she came into conflict with the legions of Rome ; but in everything that touches thought and taste, and art and imagination, she gave laws to her conquerors. Yet for all that, she needed the teaching which the poor Galileans had to give. What was the religion of Greece? It was mainly a worship of corrupt human nature under various forms ; a worship of human strength, human cleverness, human waywardness, human wickedness. Nothing is more remarkable than the failure of the Greek theology to attain in Zeus a supreme absolute divinity. And in the religion of the Greek people we find nothing like an Almighty, much less a Holy God, while a God of Love is utterly undreamt of. All the fiercest and most debasing passions of men were freely attributed by the Greek people to their deities, without a suspicion that they were thereby degrading the divinity ; until at last an effort was made by some leading minds, such as Plato, to raise the conception of God to something more pure and, as we should say, spiritual. But this experiment cannot be said to have succeeded. The old popular religion was too brittle and baseless a thing to be tampered with. To discuss its origin, to assign a higher meaning to its usages and ideas, was, in fact, to subject it to a process of dissolution. It decayed, slowly but inevitably, as a religion, while philosophy tried to rehabilitate it ; and when this process was complete, philosophy could not take its place. For, say what men will, philosophy is one thing and religion is another. Philosophy, at any rate, deals exclusively with thought, religion largely with conscience. Philosophy can never be for the many ; while religion is evidently false to its essential character if it exists only for the few.

Thus it was that, while in Greek life, as it met the eye, everything seemed so proud and fair, there was an undertone of disquiet and pain, which more than justified the merciful Words of our Lord Jesus Christ. If in all that relates to the outward grace of human existence, or to the higher culture of man's mental faculties, Greece had everything to teach, it is most certain that, so far as man's heart and conscience were concerned, she had everything to learn. A few years hence, and there would be plenty of work for St. Paul to do, not only

in Philippi and in Thessalonica, but in Corinth, and in Athens. Greece, if any country, would dispute the claims of a Jewish Peasant to teach her what was true. And yet Greece had deep need of the eternal Gospel; and the scorn which might have been provoked by the Words of Christ would assuredly die away, when the time came, into the gratitude of worship and of love.

‘Ah!’ it will be said, ‘this is an old story. You are talking as if we knew only of the ancient world as our fathers conceived it a hundred years ago; the world of classical antiquity, of Greece and Rome. But since then men have learnt to entertain a much wider and juster idea of the religions of antiquity, particularly of the religions of the ancient East. First on the Continent, and then in this country, the sacred books of these religions have been rendered into the languages of modern Europe, and we read, in our own tongues, the ancient words which were to Persia, to India, to China, what our Bible is to us. We find ourselves in intimate contact with religions, compared with which Christianity is a modern innovation; and it is too late to parade pretensions which were only tolerable when knowledge was limited, and thought on these subjects was not yet free.’

This is what may be said; but we shall, I think, find that our larger knowledge, while enhancing our sense of the boldness of our Lord’s claim to teach all the nations, does not diminish our sense of its justice. Undoubtedly of late years we have learned to see more clearly that in the ancient religions there were primary elements of truth imbedded in blocks of surrounding error, and often even gigantic errors which were but distortions of hidden truths. Had it not been so, these religions would long since have broken up altogether. They have lasted so long only in consequence of the incorporated elements of truth which have made their reception possible. But their course was and is, upon the whole, a downward course; the truth in them becoming less and fainter, the error greater and darker. This might be illustrated from the case of the Indian religions. The earliest religious notions are far purer than the later ones; the early Vedas than the later commentaries on the Vedas. The modern idea that the religious history of mankind is a progressive and ascending movement from fetichism to Theism, is at issue with St. Paul’s account, at the beginning of his Epistle to the Romans, of the progressive perversion and degradation of the idea of God,

through man's disloyalty to the light of nature and conscience.<sup>1</sup> And St. Paul's account is really in accordance with the facts. The falsehood which was in all the old heathen religions constantly dragged them down to a lower and lower point of degradation. As men lost sight of God, they fell more and more entirely under the power of the natural world. Thus, while as in the two forms of Indian religion the higher minds saw the end of man in the absorption of the individual in the universal life of nature, or in an universal annihilation, the mass of the people, as in all Pantheistic nature-religions, worshipped the several powers of nature, as so many separate divinities. And how deeply degraded the worship of nature's productive powers might become, we see in the Moloch and Baal worship that meet us in Holy Scripture, where sensuality and cruelty were direct results of the very idea of the worship. The more we know of the heathen religions of the ancient East, the more striking is the contrast between the impotence of the germ of truth which they severally embody, and the power of the falsehood and degradation with which it is associated, and which made our Lord's commission to His Apostles so needful as an errand of mercy.

True indeed it is, that, in respect of these ancient religions, Jesus Christ is still on the threshold of His work. But those who know most about India and Japan, tell us that in these populations there has already begun a fermentation of thought, not unlike that which preceded the conversion of the Roman Empire fifteen centuries ago. And, whatever for a time may be the discouragement of the Christian army, while laying siege to these fortresses of ancient error, despair is impossible, if only for the reason, that whether in Palestine or Greece, or India or China, or Japan or Persia or Africa, the Christian commanders know that they have friends within the walls. They have a friend in man's inextinguishable thirst for truth, which nothing but God's one revelation of Himself in Christ can satisfy; they have a friend in man's conscience, never utterly beyond the reach of an appeal to the sense of sin, and never to find perfect rest, save in the atoning work of Jesus Christ Crucified; above all, they have a friend in the latent capacity of every human being for the Divine Life, which, nevertheless, can only be lived in union with Him Who is both God and Man. Sooner, or later, these allies within the walls will open the gates of each city of error, and bid the Christian hosts take possession of it in their Master's Name.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i. 18-32.

## III.

Thirdly, observe the encouragement which is to persuade the Apostles to undertake this commission: "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Here, it well might seem, the consciousness of authority reaches its climax. No mere man, being in possession of his reason and judgment, would have dared to utter these words. You and I are looking forward to that great change which we name Death. Do we know enough to say to any friend, or child, or pupil: "When I am gone from sight, I will still be with you"? These great Words of Jesus Christ are not satisfied by saying that Christ's character, or teaching, or atoning Death, would be the perpetual possession of His Church. "I am with you all days" means, if anything, a personal Presence; and such a promise, most assuredly, He alone could make, Who, as being truly God, knew Himself to be Master of both worlds. "I am with you all days." He promises us, not the gift of a good memory, but His Presence.

Let us reflect how different the case would be if He had only said, 'The memory of My Life and work shall be with you alway.' What a difference there is between a mere memory and a presence! At first, indeed, when we have just lost a relation or friend, memory, in its importunity and anguish, seems to be and to do all that a presence could do—perhaps even more. It gathers up the past and heaps it on the present; it crowds into the thoughts of a few minutes the incidents of a lifetime; it has about it an eagerness and a vividness which was wanting, while its object was still with us! But then a memory decays. That it should do so seems impossible at first: we protest to ourselves and to the world that it will be as fresh as ever to the last day of our existence. But memory is only an effort of the human mind, while a presence is independent of it. And the human mind has limited powers, which are easily exhausted; it cannot always continue on the strain. So a time comes when memory's first freshness passes. Then other thoughts and interests and occupations crowd in upon us, and claim their share of the little all that we have to give; and thus that which seemed to be so fresh and imperishable is already becoming faded and indistinct. Think of some personal friend, or of any of the celebrated men whose names were on every one's lips, and who have died within the last



few years. At first it seems as if you might predict with confidence that the world would go on thinking and talking of them for at least a generation. But already the sure and fatal action of time upon a memory, however great and striking, is making itself felt. Even in our thoughts about them, the departed are passing into that land of shadows, where shadows soon die away into the undistinguishable haze and gloom beyond.

It is otherwise with a presence, whether we see it or not. We know that it is here. If our friend is in the next room, busily occupied, and unable to give us his time just now, still the knowledge that he is close at hand, and can be applied to, if necessary, is itself a comfort to us. We can go to him if we like. His being here places us in a very different position from that which we should occupy if he had left us, and we could only think of him as having been with us heretofore, though really absent now. A presence is a fact, independent of our moods of mind : it is a fact, whether we recognise it or not ; and in our Lord's Presence there is a fulness of joy<sup>1</sup> which means hope, work, power, eventual victory.

This is a factor in the life and work of the Church of Christ with which persons do not reckon who look at her only from the outside, and judge of her strength and prospects as they would judge those of any human society. They say that she will die out, because this or that force which has undoubted weight in the affairs of men is for the time being telling heavily against her. If large sections of popular feeling or literature, or the public policy of some great country, or the influence of a new and enterprising philosophy, or the bias of a group of powerful minds, are against her, forthwith we hear the cry, 'The mission of the Apostles is now coming to an end ; the Church will fail.' Do not be in too great a haste, my good friends, about this ; you have yet to reckon with a force invisible, and perhaps, so far as you are concerned, unsuspected, but never more real and operative than at this moment ; you have forgotten the Presence of Christ. He did not retreat to heaven when His first Apostles died ; He promised to be with them to the end of the world ; He spoke not merely to the eleven before Him, but to the vast multitude of successors, who defiled before His Eye down to the utmost limits of time. "Lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the world." With us by His Spirit ; with us in the great Sacrament of His

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xvi. 11.



love ; with us amid weaknesses, divisions, failures, disappointments : He is with us still. And it is His Presence alone which sustains His envoys, and gives to their work whatever it has had, or has, or has to have, of vigour and permanence.

With that work every Christian should associate himself. Every Christian should have in him, together with the love of Christ, something of the heart of an Apostle. Each of us should feel that his creed is, and must be, in the best sense of the word, aggressive : it must assail the forms of sin and error which prevail around it. Every worshipper of Christ must in his measure make disciples, and proclaim the undying commands and truths of Christ. And then with him too there shall tarry the Presence of the Most Holy, as the sanction and warrant of his work. You are not asked to-day to assist any one missionary object ; and therefore it is the more allowable to say that not to be doing something by word, or act, or self-sacrifice, for the extension of Christ's kingdom among men, is to be already losing a true hold on Christianity. If you should desire a practical suggestion, there is the collection for the Bishop of London's Fund throughout the diocese next Sunday ; an effort to bring the hundreds of thousands in this great city who live, it may be feared, without any religion at all, within the hearing of the Gospel and Church of Christ. Or there is that noble man—a man of truly Apostolic proportions,—Bishop Steere, on a short visit to England, asking help for his work among the races, for whom he has already done so much, on the eastern coast of Africa ; and you might send for him what you can afford to the Office of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. Anyhow, do something to associate yourselves with Christ's Apostles ; something that, in another life, you may look back upon as having contributed, however little, to carrying on the great enterprise that began when our Lord bade these simple Galileans make disciples of all the nations, and that will only end with the last hour of time.

## SERMON XXXV.

### WITNESSES FOR JESUS CHRIST.

ACTS I. 8.

*Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.*

AT this Easter season we naturally turn to the consideration of those precious Words which fell from our Blessed Lord during the interval that elapsed between His Resurrection and His Ascension into heaven. And among these sayings, the text has the distinction of being the last ; it is the parting utterance of our ascending Saviour. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." And then we are told that "when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up ; and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

Undoubtedly these Words of Jesus must have had a meaning for the Apostles which they could have for no other men. The Apostles had been told that they were to "bear witness," because they "had been with" Jesus "from the beginning."<sup>1</sup> And when afterwards St. Matthias was elected unto the place of Judas, the electors were reminded that their choice was limited to "those men who had companied with" themselves "all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them," since they needed a "witness to the Resurrection."<sup>2</sup> Thus the text is in fact an anticipation of the history which is afterwards unfolded in the Acts of the Apostles. Parting from the holy city, the circles of missionary effort widen perpetually ; they reach beyond Judæa, beyond Samaria, beyond the bounds of civilised heathendom, towards the full measure of their predestined range, "the uttermost part of the earth."

<sup>1</sup> St. John xv. 27.

<sup>2</sup> Acts i. 21 22.

Still, although for the Apostles personally, and for the Apostles as representing their successors in the Episcopate, our Lord's Words had this distinguished and unrivalled significance, they also contain a wider range of meaning, which leads me to invite your attention to them this evening. For the Apostles standing before their departing Lord impersonate not merely the Ministry, but the Church ; and Jesus, in His last Words on earth, speaks not merely to the clerical order ; He bequeaths a legacy of glory and of suffering to the millions of Christendom. "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

## I.

"Witnesses unto Me." Our Lord Himself, in His sacred Person, is the solemn truth, the glorious reality, to which His servants are to bear their witness. Certainly in a parallel passage in St. Luke's Gospel our Lord, when referring to His Passion and His Resurrection,<sup>2</sup> is represented as saying, "Ye are witnesses of these things." But there are some grounds for believing that the words in St. Luke may have been uttered at a slightly earlier date than that of the actual Ascension. And although, as a matter of fact, the "witness to the Resurrection" was, from the necessity of their case, the leading feature of the recorded preaching of the Apostles, and witness to His redemptive work was clearly involved in any true witness to the Person of Jesus, still we may not overlook the precise form of expression which our Lord adopts in the text. 'Witnesses unto Me ! Others might witness to My miracles, they were wrought in the face of day ; others might repeat My discourses, "spoken in the temple, whither the Jews always resort ;" and you, in witnessing to Me, will witness likewise to My works and to My teaching. But My works and My teaching are but the rays which proceed from My inmost Life, My Personality, Myself ; and it is to this, to nothing less than this, to all that this implies, that I bid you witness.'

Contrast our Lord's Words with what we should expect from a great man at the present day. We should expect him to tell us that his endowments or his achievements were after all the gift of heaven ; that in himself he was nothing, and unworthy of the greatness which had been forced upon him. If he should forget his native poverty, and claim honour for himself, as distinct from the gift or influence with which he had been

endowed, then our good opinion would be outraged. We should, in our deep disappointment, proclaim him unworthy of his greatness, as being incapable of that modesty which is so winning in human conduct, because it is so true to the facts of human life. Jesus Christ our Lord defies this rule of human judgments, and the conscience of mankind justifies Him in defying it. He Who could say to the men of His generation, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?"<sup>1</sup>; He Who could dare to utter the tremendous Words, "I and the Father are One,"<sup>2</sup> could truly feel that it was impossible for Him to eclipse any higher greatness by drawing attention to Himself. His Words were His Own. His works were His Own. As God He was the author and giver of the gifts which He received as Man. And therefore He thought it not robbery to draw the eyes of men away from the miracles and Words which flashed forth from Him, away from the sights and sounds which heralded a mighty Presence, to Himself, the Worker, the Speaker, Who gave their greatness to the Words which He spake, and to the works which He wrought. My brethren, the Words of Jesus, which challenge "witness," attention, homage, reverence, love, for His personal Self, are only not intolerable because nothing less would have been adequate or true.

## II.

But you ask, How can we bear witness to a person? We can describe a fact like a miracle, or we can repeat an instruction like the Sermon on the Mount. We can witness to that which we know; but how can we know, how can we seize, feel, see, possess, so subtle, so impalpable a thing as a person? especially how can we witness to a superhuman person, to One Whom His Apostle describes as "over all, God blessed for ever;"<sup>3</sup> to One Whom we name in the Creed, "God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God"?

Let me, by way of reply, suggest to you in turn another question. Can we be witnesses to each other? Unquestionably we can; for we can know each other. And by this knowledge we mean not knowledge of the form and colour of the body or features, but knowledge of that which gives to features and to form their interest—knowledge of the invisible spirit which underlies them. That which interests man lastingly in his brother man, as being the seat and the object of

<sup>1</sup> St. John viii. 46.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. x. 30.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. ix. 5.

human interest, is the soul. We cannot, indeed, see the soul with the eye of the body. But with the eye of the mind we can see it, and form a very clear conception of it, which we call "character." For in this life the soul is linked to the body on such terms, that it can come forth from the shadow of the invisible world, and assert its presence. It cannot be seen in its essence ; but it can be seen in its effects. The body is but its home, and its instrument, which it moulds, bends, subdues, weakens or invigorates, overshadows or illuminates, by its presence. By the organs of the body the soul moves forth from its recesses, and enters into communion with other souls. Learned men have recently been discussing afresh that most interesting problem—the origin of language. But the Church of God has from the first seen in human language a special gift of God, complete when it was first given, and a counterpart of the gift of an immortal soul ; an expression of its life ; a medium of giving currency to its feeling and its thought. When a man speaks, we read in his language, in its form, in its tone, in its very accent, the movement of an undying spirit. We read the strength or weakness of an understanding, the warmth of a heart, the vigour or feebleness of a will ; we read thought, resolve, feeling, character. Language is the living expression of the soul's life ; it flows forth from the soul, as the spring of water from the fountain : "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh."<sup>1</sup> Man cannot really disguise for long periods the true features of the soul, even though, like the ancient hypocrites of the days of David, he should give fair words with the mouth, but curse with the heart.<sup>2</sup> For language is too true an instrument to be lastingly tampered with ; it is a revelation of soul to soul ; it is a relentless witness, which drags the human spirit forth from its hiding-place to be judged publicly, and before its time, at the bar of humanity ; it is an artist, who traces, without much real exaggeration or disguise, the lines of beauty which grace the inmost features of an invisible spirit. And as through language the soul speaks to the ear of man, so by action the soul addresses itself to the eye of man. Action is a more perfect unveiling of the soul than language ; for it implies more deliberation. When a man acts, specially under circumstances of responsibility or of difficulty, which invest action with emphasis, and make it the product of the whole force of his being, then his true passions, instincts, lines of thought,

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xii. 34.<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxii. 4.



capacities, all his littlenesses, and all his greatness, come to the surface, and you read his inmost nature in the text of his action. Once more, the soul is too active and imperious a tenant not to leave its mark upon the texture of the body, which it has inhabited for a term of years. We read something of the soul in the human countenance; it speaks through the human eye. This is why when those whom we love or honour have passed away, we love to detain on canvas or in photograph a memorial, which recalls to us something more than an accustomed form, since it is the symbol of a spiritual nature. The eye can rest on nothing beneath the sun so deeply interesting as the face of any child of Adam. Every human face is a point at which we obtain an insight into an unseen world; since every human face, not less by its reserves than by its disclosures, records the play of thought and passion within a subtle immaterial spirit. Fear, joy, pride, lust, rage, sadness, shame, love, patience,—each by reiterated throbs leaves its mark upon the flesh, till at length the soul has moulded the ductile matter, so that it shall truly portray its tale of baseness or of beauty; till at length we have produced a picture which we involuntarily exhibit before the eyes of our fellow-men as a speaking revelation of our inmost life. The bright eye and the lofty forehead proclaim to all thought and genius; while there are lines and features at the disposal of the moral forces of the soul, which can express such scorn, contempt, and hatred as might be natural to devils, and others that can portray the tenderness of benevolence, or the refinement of high sanctity. Thus, through a man's language, his actions, and his countenance, his soul speaks to the soul of his brother man; and while the essence of the soul is still necessarily hidden, the outward effects of its action convey a living and accurate impression of its secret life.

### III.

Now in Jesus Christ, God made use of this provision of His creative wisdom to enter into communion with His creatures. Reason may discover God's existence and His attributes; reason may even attain under favourable conditions to a cold and partial appreciation of His glory. But to reason, unaided by Revelation outside the soul, and by grace within it, God must ever seem abstract, remote, inaccessible; too certain and necessary a Fact to be refused a place in thought, yet too



wholly disconnected from human interests to be regarded with anything approaching to that passionate affection, which is a characteristic of the Christian life. Therefore, that He might embrace His fallen creatures with a Revelation of His beauty, so intelligible and so captivating, that rejection, or even resistance, should seem wellnigh impossible; therefore, that in characters, which from long practice man would read at sight, God might reveal to man His inmost Life; the Most High robed Himself in a human body and a human soul. This was the Incarnation. The thoughtful Gentile might have learnt something concerning Him in the natural world; the devout Jew might have read more of His true character in the Mosaic law; but a living personal revelation of what He is was reserved for the faith of Christendom.

There are strangers, alas! to our faith, who yet confess that in the Gospels they encounter a Form of unapproached grace and power. In the last age not merely the insulted and suffering Church of France, but infidel writers like Diderot and Rousseau challenged the sceptics of the time, in language which has since become classical, to match, if they could, the moral beauty of the Gospel. For in the Gospel we meet with One Who in His pre-eminent humanity is perfectly one with us, yet also most mysteriously distinct. So rare and refined is His type of manhood, that He escapes the peculiarities of either sex, since He combines the tender sympathies of woman with the strength and decision of man. He is a carpenter, but no trade or calling has dwarfed or narrowed the lofty stature of His Life: He is pure benevolence, tied to no one form of human existence, yet adapting Himself to all. He is born in extreme poverty, yet He has no grudge against wealth; the wealthy classes are in the Gospel "the unfortunates." He is born of the race of Israel, on whom there has ever been stamped a national spirit of fierce and unrivalled intensity, yet His Jewish blood carries with it no trace of Jewish prejudice. He rises in His mighty charity above the barriers of race and character which divide the nations. He is claimed as their representative, by Greek and Roman, and African and Teuton, no less truly than by the children of His people; yet the closest scrutiny can discover in Him as little of the formalism and fanaticism of the Jew as of the cynical intellectualism of the Greek, or of the ambition and statecraft of the Roman. No class prejudice, no professional prejudice, no national prejudice, has left its taint upon that Ideal Form, so as to make it

less than representative of pure humanity. Yet, so far is He from being a cold, passionless statue, divested of all interests, strictly human, that there is a warmth and vividness in His character which none who have truly loved or wept can fail to understand and to embrace. Thus He loves with the passionate tenderness that shed tears over the grave of Lazarus, yet His affections contract not the faintest trace of an earthly blemish. He hates evil, and He denounces it in stern and unsparing words, but He is never, in the heat of opposition or condemnation, betrayed for one moment into an unbalanced statement; Herod does not make Him a revolutionist, the Pharisees do not force Him to be an Antinomian. His triumphs cannot disturb, and His humiliations do but enhance, the serene, the incomparable grandeur and self-possession of His Soul. Earnest and yet calm, full of tenderness yet full of resolution, living in contemplation yet ever ready for action, He combines as none other, that which compels our reverence with that which provokes our ecstatic affection. The nobleness and the loveliness of the human spirit, which ever elsewhere are found apart or joined in unequal proportions, are in Him fused and blended so perfectly, that—I quote the noble words of a layman of our own day—"though the mental eye be strained to aching, it cannot discover whether That on Which it gazes in the Gospel be more an Object of reverence or an Object of love."<sup>1</sup>

Well might we surmise that such a character as this was more than human. We know ourselves too well, my brethren, to suppose that human nature would conceive the full idea, much less that it could create the reality. Even to the Roman officer, who stood beneath the Cross on the evening of Good Friday, the Truth revealed itself; the flash of moral beauty lightening up the darkness which then might seem to have closed in upon the world. "Truly this was the Son of God."<sup>2</sup> Nay, more, Jesus Himself had used language which no intimacy of union between God and holy souls would warrant if it were not literally true. He speaks to the Father of the "glory which I had with Thee before the world was."<sup>3</sup> He says solemnly, "Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>4</sup> Again, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but He Which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man Which is in heaven."<sup>5</sup> These and such-like sayings, which the Jews understood and con-

<sup>1</sup> Goldwin Smith.<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxvii. 54.<sup>3</sup> St. John xvii. 5.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. viii. 58.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. iii. 13.

demned as blasphemy, which the Apostles understood and accepted as statements of the literal truth, force us to a dilemma. Either we must resign that vision of beauty which we meet in the character of Jesus as an untrustworthy phantom, since it is dashed with a pretension involving at once falsehood and blasphemy, or we must confess that Jesus is Divine; Divine, not in the sense in which men in a vague way ascribe divinity to the highest human excellence without meaning to assert literal Godhead; but Divine in that absolute and incommunicable sense, in which we ascribe Godhead to the Universal Father, Whose Power, Wisdom, and Goodness know no bounds. Jesus is God; and in the acts, the words, the very physiognomy of Jesus, the Apostles came face to face with the Supreme, Infinite, Perfect Being of beings. Although dwelling in light which no man could approach unto,<sup>1</sup> He had passed forth from His inaccessible home; He had taken our nature as an instrument through which to act upon us, but also as an interpreter who should translate His Own matchless perfections into audible words and visible actions; so that He might be felt, studied, surveyed, known, ay, even handled, and then witnessed to with all the devotion that is due to a revelation of the highest truth and of the highest beauty. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (for the Life was manifested, and we have seen It, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life Which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you."<sup>2</sup>

Surely this very week we have witnessed, or rather we have experienced, in this metropolis the power which a strong character can wield over the thoughts and feelings of men.<sup>3</sup> London has just offered to a stranger of European reputation a welcome so spontaneous, and wellnigh so universal, that at this very moment the unaccustomed spectacle of your enthusiasm rivets the eyes of astonished Europe. Yet they who study the subtle laws and currents which affect opinion, have told us that, in this remarkable demonstration, it would be an error to

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 St. John i. 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> General Garibaldi entered London on Monday, April 11, 1864. Since these words were uttered, the preacher has learned facts respecting Garibaldi's attitude towards Christianity, which would now oblige him to suppress the allusion in the text, or to express himself differently

recognise sympathy with any political or religious opinion : since the enthusiasm has been shared by men of all classes and creeds. You have been paying homage to courage, disinterestedness, and simplicity ; to a man who, having power and wealth within his grasp, cared not to clutch them ; to personal qualities, which always and everywhere exact a tribute of admiration and respect, whether we detect them in the past or in the present, whether in a countryman or in a foreigner, whether in the service of a cause which forfeits or of a cause which commands our sympathies. But permit me to remind you that an enthusiasm, of which the object is merely human, must pass away, since its object is necessarily transient and imperfect. As you, my countrymen, sit before me, with the ashes of Wellington beneath your feet, you little dream of the warmth with which Englishmen named their great general on the morrow of Waterloo. One only has succeeded in creating an impression, which is as fresh in the hearts and thoughts of His true disciples at this moment as it was eighteen centuries ago ; and as we listen to His Words, and watch His actions, and almost seem to gaze on His Face, irradiated with superhuman beauty in the pages of the Gospels, we feel that He, as none other, had a right to command distant and unborn generations to echo the enthusiasm of His first followers, and to say to us Englishmen of the nineteenth century, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me."

## IV.

Witnesses unto Me ! Brethren, it is a most solemn question ; is there anything in our conduct, or our words, anything that we do, or that we endure, that really bears witness, before the eyes of our fellow-men, to the Life and work of our ascended and invisible Saviour ? Or are we living, speaking, feeling, acting, thinking, much as we might have thought, acted, felt, spoken, and lived, if He had never brightened our existence ; if we had been born of Pagan parents, and had never heard of Bethlehem and Calvary ? Or are we bearing Him what our conscience tells us is a partial witness ; a witness of language but not of conduct ; a witness which attests those features of His work and doctrine which we prefer, rather than all that we know or might know about Him, and about that heritage of grace and truth which He has brought from heaven ? For, if we believe in our hearts that Jesus is God, we must see how from this glorious and lofty faith there results a derived faith in all the

Words and works of Jesus ; just as when we stand upon a central mountain height we command a panoramic view, we overlook all lesser elevations, and we understand how all the diverging valleys at our feet are fertilised by the streams which flow from the rock we have climbed, and which towers so conspicuously above them. If we have the happiness sincerely to believe the fact that Jesus is God, it cannot be a difficulty to us that His Death is a world-redeeming sacrifice for sin, that His Scriptures are inspired and infallible, that His Sacraments are channels of His quickening Life. And as we witness to His Person, we must witness, according to our measure, to all that He has attested or authorised or wrought ; because He in Whose truth and wisdom we place absolute reliance has authorised and attested and worked it. Rising from an analysis of His character to a belief in His Godhead, descending from a faith in His Godhead to a perfect acceptance of all which He teaches us ; we meet the clear, unequivocal, inalienable duty, of witnessing to Him, His Person, His Work, His Words, as the distinctive law of the Christian life.

This witness is the debt which all Christians owe to Jesus Christ our Lord. No class, or sex, or disposition, or age, or race, can claim exemption. We cannot delegate our profession of belief in Jesus, and of love for Jesus, to our clergy. It is not merely that we are bound to witness to Him. If we are living Christian lives, we cannot help doing so. The power and beauty of the Christian life does not depend upon the accidents which part men from each other in this world ; it has nothing to do with station, education, income, or blood. In Christ Jesus neither the presence nor the absence of these things availeth anything, but the new creation. There is a ray of heavenly light which plays almost visibly upon the soul that enjoys real communion with Jesus ; a beauty of spirit and temper, which tells its own tale, and which is an eloquent missionary. The soul that believes and prays cannot close up the doors of feeling and of thought ; cannot prevent the escape of that heavenly virtue, of those powers of the eternal world, which have renewed its own deepest life. Such a soul recommends prayer, and sacraments, and all that brings men close to God by the mere fact of its own felt unearthliness.

Be Christians indeed, and you will forthwith witness for Jesus. You who are at the summits of society, and you who are at its base ; you who teach, and you who learn ; you who command, and you who obey ; masters and servants, old and



young, unlettered and scholars, each of you may bear his witness to our Almighty Saviour. In the lower and feeble sense they who practise the natural virtues, witness to Him, Who is the Source of all goodness. And thus courage under difficulties, and temperance amid self-indulgent livers, and justice truly observed between man and man, are forms of witness. They bear this witness who are in power, and who, renouncing selfish purposes, aim at the good of others. They too bear it, who have wealth, and who spend it not in perishing baubles, but in relieving the mass of bodily or spiritual suffering, which in this metropolis presents such a ghastly contrast to the luxury that might seem to forget its existence. The friendless young man in London, who leads a pure life amidst strong temptations ; the maid-of-all-work, who serves a hard master faithfully and affectionately ; the delicately-bred lady, who renounces the empty attractions of society, to nurse the fever-stricken sufferer in the ward of a hospital, or to teach a fallen sister, from whom her own pure nature shrinks, that it is possible to be pure,—these, turning their eye on Calvary, witness to Jesus. To sacrifice self for others, to sacrifice self for truth, is to bear the witness. Each one whom I see before me, if he loves Jesus Christ, may witness to Him. Yes, my hearers, though you are in weak health, or in narrow circumstances, or elderly and unmarried, or have a sensitive respect for public opinion, and such a dread of putting yourselves forward, that anything like a public profession seems to you to imply insincerity, you too may forget your prejudices and your sensitiveness in forgetting self at the Feet of your Lord. And you, who have a strong nature, a hard head, or overmastering impulses ; you, who fancy that your self-development into a healthy animal, or into a vigorous thinker, is your highest mark of destiny ; you who cultivate originality, and who proudly disdain the lessons or precepts which would force you, as you deem, into the type and mould of common men ; you, too, after a while, may learn that you were in the Heart of Jesus, when He said to the representatives of His Church, “Ye shall be witnesses unto Me.” For nature is the raw material which grace moulds for God ; and a strong nature does not lose its strength because it has been made holy and pure. Such is the range and power of grace, that we can despair of no man. Out of the very stones of pride and of unbelief it can raise up children to the Father of the faithful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. iii 9.



But they, especially, who know our Lord in His pardoning mercy, and who have looked up from the depths of spiritual agony to the Great Sufferer, from Whose open Wounds there streams a tide of atoning virtue, to find in Him rest and peace—they will hardly be content with a silent witness. They will speak for Him, as from a full heart, whenever they can do so. For the disease which He heals is universal, and the efficacy of His cure is undoubted. It is a real distress to them, not merely that He should be wronged or misrepresented, but that He should be forgotten. All of you, believe it, may bear this witness also. The redemptive Love of Jesus, like the sun in the heavens, is the inheritance of all who will come to have a share in it: and, as with the heart that Love is believed in unto righteousness, so with the mouth confession of it is made unto salvation.<sup>1</sup> They who have natural opportunities for influence, who teach the young, who write for the press, who come into contact with many friends or many dependants, can bear this witness for the Lord Who bought them. They need not shrink back from the sense of their own unworthiness, since they are witnesses not merely to His Person but to His grace. It is indeed easy thus to witness for Christ, in a state of society where there is perfect freedom of opinion. It is hardly difficult to witness for Him, in the face of social pressure, and against established but disarmed ungodliness. But to witness for Christ, as did the first Christians, when torture and death were the penalty of loyalty; to refuse to scatter the incense to Cæsar when refusal was to embrace an agony; to speak for Jesus from the rack or from the scaffold, when the broken accents of the sufferer were raised by the force of his death-struggle to the sublimest height of impassioned and burning eloquence;—this is a witness which Christians have borne, and which is recorded to rebuke our feeble Christianity. Not merely grey-haired Apostles, like James and Peter and Paul; not merely saints of high learning and station, and force of character, like Polycarp, or Justin Martyr, or Cyprian; but rough soldiers and poor working men, and mothers of families, and young lads and maidens; those in whom the pulse of life was strong, and those in whom it was feeble, have thus carried forward again and again their witness for Christ to a point of heroic endurance. If their courage provokes our wonder, it surely might strengthen our weakness or forbid our fears.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x. 10.

In this witness of suffering, and of silent persevering obedience, we see the central element of the growth and victory of the Church. Argument may have done something ; but the masses of men have no time for argument, and are inaccessible to its force. Miracles actually witnessed may have done more ; although the Gospel-history itself may convince us that the evidence of miracle cannot alone carry conviction to a stubborn unbeliever ; he has many resources for evading it. But the Christian life, in which the love of Jesus Christ has dethroned and crushed out the natural selfishness of the human soul, exerts a silent but resistless fascination over at least a large number of those who are brought into close contact with it. It is not the influence of high education, or of vigorous intellect, or of disciplined will. It is moral beauty which is seen, as you gaze at it, to be true and to be strong, and which compels first admiration and love, and afterwards reverence and submission.

Again and again in the early days of Christianity the ordinary current of social influences was reversed, and the aristocracy of birth or wealth learnt how to believe and to obey from the plebeian neighbour or the poor slave who was yet the true nobleman of the Church,—a very peer in the aristocracy of sanctity. Again and again the little maid spoke to Naaman of the healing virtue of the waters of Israel. Again and again Daniel prophesied and suffered in the palaces of the second Babylon. St. Paul tells the Philippians that there were worshippers of Christ shedding forth light and truth among the slaves of the Cæsar Nero.<sup>1</sup> And many a Roman lady must have learnt the preciousness of her undying soul, and the power of the Atoning Blood, from the poor Syrian slave-girl who arranged her toilet or who waited at her table. Thus the Church expanded in the midst of a hostile society in virtue of the power of its secret life. And that which we admire in the glorious past must be our hope in the anxious future ; not merely because Christianity maintains its ascendancy, by its hold upon the lives of individual Christians, but because society itself would perish if it were not reinforced by an unselfish witness to the Life of Jesus. There are vast reservoirs in which all the ambitions, and lusts, and brutalities of men are confined, as it were, within artificial embankments ; and no embankment can permanently resist the pressure, and prevent the overwhelming ruin of a social catastrophè, if the

<sup>1</sup> Phil. i. 13 ; iv. 22.

materials of resistance be not welded together by some higher principle than the self-interest of classes ; if it do not rest more or less upon the foundation of a charity which witnesses by word and deed to the transcendent moral majesty, ay, to the glorious Godhead, of the Lord Jesus.

Read yonder inscription which commemorates the great architect who built St. Paul's. It bids you look around this Cathedral, since this Cathedral itself is his memorial : "*Si quæris monumentum, circumspice.*" And the scattered company of His faithful witnesses are the true monument of the Lord Jesus ; they represent to other men something of the glory of their invisible Lord. They may be met with less frequently on the highways of power, or fame, or wealth than elsewhere. But at this moment our Lord is represented in all classes of society by devoted Christians, who hand on from this to another generation the lustre of a life, which is the best evidence of the Gospel. "*Si quæris monumentum, circumspice.*" Look around, watch, and you will see them. Nay, rather, resolve this night by the grace of Christ to join that company of His witnesses. What a power might go forth from beneath this dome into the great city which lies around us, if each Christian who hears me would resolve, God helping him, to bear a true, unflinching witness to the Lord Jesus ! What glory to Him Who shed His Blood ! what strength to His Church ! what blessings to countless souls ! what unspeakable gain to those who witness ! Every hard effort generously faced, every sacrifice cheerfully submitted to, every word spoken under difficulties, raises those who speak or act or suffer to a higher level ; endows them with a clearer sight of God ; braces them with a will of more strength and freedom ; warms them with a more generous and large and tender heart. Blessed they who here in the days of their trial lose something, or suffer something, for Jesus. For beyond there is a vision which no merely human words may dare to paint ; a vision which shall one day be true to all who have witnessed for our Lord ; a vision of a world, where all has faded from sight, save only the redeemed souls, and the everlasting Object of their love.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of

the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple : and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb Which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rev. vii. 13-17.

## SERMON XXXVI.

### DIVINE TEACHING GRADUAL.

ST. JOHN XVI. 12, 13.

*I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.*

ALL the Gospels appointed for the five Sundays after Easter are taken from that according to St. John. One only, that for the first Sunday, belongs to the period which we are at present commemorating; the forty days which passed between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Jesus Christ. The other four are from discourses of Jesus Christ, pronounced before His Crucifixion; and of these the last three from the one discourse pronounced in the Supper-Room. Historically speaking, these Gospels seem to be, at first sight, out of place; in reading them we go back from Eastertide to a time from which we are separated by the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. But looking to the contents of these Gospels, they are, we must see, strictly appropriate. They are, one and all, preparations for a great departure, and for that which will follow it. They might have been spoken, so far as the contents go—I am, of course, saying nothing of their immediate purpose—they might have been spoken, at least in the main, during the great forty days, just as well as on the eve of the Passion.

Our Lord has referred to His approaching departure, and, as a consequence, “sorrow had filled the hearts of His disciples.”<sup>1</sup> In order to relieve this, He proceeds to explain to them that His departure was to be, not merely glorious for Himself, but expedient for them. If He remained upon the earth, the Holy Spirit, or Comforter, would not come to them. He Himself, if

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvi. 6.

He remained among them continuously, could not be an object of a purely spiritual apprehension. Where sight is satisfied, there is no sufficient room for faith, and, so far, no need of that Divine and Invisible Friend, Who is the Author of faith in the soul of man. But if Christ departed, then faith would become necessary as well as possible; and our Lord promised to send the Author and Giver of this grace. "If I depart, I will send Him unto you."<sup>1</sup> When He is come, what will He do? First of all, He will achieve a moral victory over the world: "He will reprove the world of sin:" He will convince it gradually of the sin of rejecting Jesus. Next, He will reprove the world "of righteousness:" He will teach it the existence of a new standard of goodness. The righteousness of Christ will be seen to be higher than the righteousness of the Pharisees, when the Ascension shall have demonstrated the righteousness of the ascending Christ. Lastly, He will reprove the world "of judgment:"<sup>2</sup> He will teach it that the Crucifixion, which seemed to be the victory of the evil one, was really the day of his judgment and humiliation. "The prince of this world is judged."<sup>3</sup> But what will He teach to the Church, to those Apostles who had believed in and followed our Lord, and who in losing Him appeared to be losing their all? This is the question before us.

This question is partly answered by our Lord's Words in the text: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth."

Now these words have a doctrinal and a moral significance. They teach us a great truth about Christian doctrine, and a serious duty in the Christian life.

## I.

Here we see, first of all, that our Lord's Own oral teaching, during His sojourn upon the earth, did not embrace all necessary Christian doctrine. This is a point of great importance. It is not unusual to hear people say in the present day: "I am a Christian in this sense, that I accept, I believe, I obey, only the very Words of Christ. They are enough for me: I want no more. The Apostles, St. Paul especially, taught some doctrines which Christ Himself did not teach: I do not wish

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvi. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 11.



to be bound by these superadded doctrines. The Church has, in her creeds and elsewhere, used language which I do not find in the Words of Christ : I may reject that language. It is enough for me to read, to admire, to feel the beauty of the Sermon on the Mount, and of Christ's other discourses. This is genuine, essential, imperishable Christianity. The rest is superfluous. It may be very well in its way, but it stands on a totally different footing, and there can be no great harm in rejecting it.'

This language has been in substance used at least by one recent writer of some reputation ; and it recommends itself because it sounds at first hearing so loyal to our Lord. It seems to give implicit credit to His Words all the better from refusing such credit to all others : just as politeness towards a single individual is more remarked and remarkable, when the person who shows it is habitually uncivil to the rest of the world. By a confession of faith such as this, men flatter themselves that they can do two things at once ; that they can cut down the Christian creed to very narrow dimensions, and at the same time be all the better Christians, for keeping themselves exclusively to the teaching of Christ. It is a raid upon the claims of faith, conducted in the name of an extraordinary reverence professed for its Object. And yet here to-day, as we listen to our Lord, in His last discourse, we find Him saying as plainly as He can, that He Himself did not undertake to teach in person all that it was necessary for His disciples as Christians to know and believe to their soul's health. For He had many things to tell His disciples which they could not bear at the time ; and which He meant to tell them, not in person, but by the agency of Another, the Unseen Comforter, or Holy Spirit, hereafter. After He had left the world, so far as His visible Presence was concerned, He would still speak to men from His invisible home. By His Spirit, He would speak in and through His Apostles. What the Apostles taught would be still His teaching, even although it should go beyond the measure of truth which He had taught Himself. For He had not said all that He meant to say : His work of teaching was to be finished by others. To the Apostles He said, "He that heareth you heareth Me ;"<sup>1</sup> and "He that receiveth you receiveth Me : and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me."<sup>2</sup> A man, then, who should think himself a good Christian for keeping only to the words

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke x. 16.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. x. 40.

of Christ, would deceive himself. He could not keep only to the Words of Christ, if he really keeps to all of them. For among these words is the saying in the text, which states, as clearly as possible, that over and above Christ's actual teaching there were truths to be taught, in His Name and by His authority ; truths which, as coming from Christ, although through others, Christians ought to receive and believe.

There are, indeed, other Words of our Lord in this discourse which at first sight appear to be at variance with His saying that He had many things to tell His disciples which they could not now bear. "Henceforth," He said, "I call you not servants ; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth : but I have called you friends ; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you."<sup>1</sup> Here there seems to be a contradiction to our Lord's statement that He still had many things to say to His disciples. But there is no contradiction in reality. So far as confidence on His side went, our Lord trusted His disciples unreservedly : they were admitted to His intimate counsels. But there was a want of spiritual comprehension on their side ; they were not yet able to receive all that He had to tell them ; and He therefore reserved it for a later time. We understand this difference in everyday life. Many a man has a wife, or a sister, with whom he has literally no secrets whatever, although she is not on that account able to share all his intellectual interests. He may be willing to confide everything ; but he may know that to enter into an account of all his thoughts at once would be a sheer waste of time ; so he defers this fuller disclosure in the hope that it will some day be appreciated. He has already made it in spirit, and intention. He does not trust the less because he does not communicate unintelligible secrets ; the time will come, perhaps, when whatever is now unintelligible will be understood.

Our Lord's teaching, then, was completed by that of the Holy Spirit. To see how this was done we need not go beyond the limits of the New Testament. "He shall take of Mine," said our Lord, "and shall show it unto you."<sup>2</sup> Our Lord gave the germs which, by the ministry of the Apostles, the Holy Spirit unfolded into momentous doctrines.

Our Lord had spoken, for instance, of the necessity that the Messiah should die, in order to correspond to the words of prophecy, "The Son of Man goeth, as it is written of Him."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> St. John xv. 15.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. xvi. 15<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 24.

He had spoken of His Blood as the Blood of the New Testament which was shed for His disciples.<sup>1</sup> In the Apostolic writings this is expanded into the doctrine of the Atonement: by Christ's death man is bought back<sup>2</sup> from captivity to sin and death; a propitiation for our sins and for the sins of the whole world is offered in the free Self-sacrifice of the Perfect Man;<sup>3</sup> and thus between God and man a peace or reconciliation<sup>4</sup> is effected: we are "accepted in the Beloved."<sup>5</sup>

Our Lord had hinted at a new ground of acceptance with God in His parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard;<sup>6</sup> in His eulogy upon the Publican who went down to his house justified rather than the Pharisee;<sup>7</sup> in His precept, "When ye have done all that is required of you, say, We are unprofitable servants."<sup>8</sup> But in St. Paul's writings we find a fully elaborated doctrine of salvation through the grace of Christ, as contrasted with that of obedience to the Jewish law. "By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."<sup>9</sup> "By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."<sup>10</sup>

Again, in the visit of the Eastern sages to the manger of Bethlehem;<sup>11</sup> in the acceptance of the Syrophenician woman;<sup>12</sup> in the interview with the Greeks at the Passover;<sup>13</sup> in the statement that the Good Shepherd had other sheep who were not of the fold of Israel, whom also He must bring, and make one fold under one Shepherd,<sup>14</sup> we have hints that the pagan nations were in some way to have their part in the Divine Saviour. In St. Paul we find the express assertion that a special revelation had been made to him, to the effect "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel."<sup>15</sup> The entire equality of pagan and Jewish converts within the Church was thus based upon hints in our Lord's Own language and practice, but was only drawn out into a sharply defined doctrine by the Apostle.

Once more, our Lord spoke about Himself, His sinlessness, His claims upon human thought and human affection, His power of enlightening and saving human beings, His future coming to

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxvi. 28.      <sup>2</sup> Rom. iii. 24; 1 Cor. i. 30; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14.

<sup>3</sup> 1 St. John ii. 2; iv. 10; Rom. iii. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. v. 10, 11; 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

<sup>6</sup> St. Matt. xx. 1-16.

<sup>7</sup> St. Luke xviii. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Eph. i. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. xvii. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Eph. ii. 8.

<sup>11</sup> St. Matt. ii. 1-12.

<sup>12</sup> St. Mark vii. 24-30,

<sup>13</sup> St. John xii. 20-36.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. x. 16.

<sup>15</sup> Eph. iii. 6.

judge all human beings, in a way which we should now-a-days think very extraordinary in any good man ; and indeed fatal to his claim to goodness, because inconsistent with sober fact. Yet there is no denying this self-assertion of Christ our Lord ; so varied, so persistent, so unflinching. He does not present Himself, as the prophets had done, only to teach men truths about God and duty, and then to withdraw Himself from hearing and sight as quietly as might be. He comes to proclaim Himself, to exhibit Himself, to draw all eyes, all hearts, towards Himself, as the Way, the Truth, the Life of men ;<sup>1</sup> as the Light of the world,<sup>2</sup> as the King<sup>3</sup> and Judge<sup>4</sup> of all.<sup>5</sup> He teaches, but He Himself is, in the last resort, the subject of His doctrine. He reveals, but He is Himself His revelation. "All men," He says, "are to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ;"<sup>6</sup> "He who hath seen Me," He says, "hath seen the Father."<sup>7</sup> "Before Abraham was, I am."<sup>8</sup> "I and the Father are one thing."<sup>9</sup>

What did this language mean ? How was it to be explained ? If it was unjustifiable, what claims of any kind would the Speaker have upon the love and trust of men ? If it was justifiable, what did it imply as to the Person of Christ ? Clearly that He was more than man. And if more than man, what was He ? Were such claims as His to be admitted on the part of any created being, angel or archangel, seraph or cherub ? Or was He indeed of that Uncreated Eternal Essence, Which we adore as the Source and End of all other existences ? Here the Holy Spirit took of the Words of Christ, and showed the truth unto the Apostles. Those words only admitted of one explanation. The Speaker was indeed Divine. And accordingly the Colossians were taught that all things were created by Him and for Him, and that He was before all things, and that by Him all things consist ;<sup>10</sup> the Romans, that He is over all, God blessed for ever ;<sup>11</sup> the Philip-pians, that even at His human Name men and angels and those beneath should bow in reverence ;<sup>12</sup> the Hebrews, that He is the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the Express Image of His Person.<sup>13</sup> And St. John in the Spirit on the Lord's day beholds Him enthroned as the Lamb, slain and glorified,

<sup>1</sup> St. John xiv. 6.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. v. 27-30.<sup>6</sup> St. John v. 23<sup>9</sup> Ibid. x. 30.<sup>12</sup> Phil. ii. 10.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. viii. 12.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xxv. 31-46.<sup>7</sup> Ibid. xiv. 9.<sup>10</sup> Col. i. 16, 17.<sup>13</sup> Heb. i. 3.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. xviii. 37.<sup>8</sup> Ibid. viii. 58.<sup>11</sup> Rom. ix. 5.

while all the highest intelligences of heaven prostrate themselves before Him and join in the new song of adoration around His throne.<sup>1</sup> And, in harmony with all this we say in the Creed that He is "very God of very God, begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father." The disciples could not have borne the full splendour of the truth of Christ's Godhead when they listened to the Sermon on the Mount. Yet the truth was the only justification of the Sermon. To revise the law given from Sinai,<sup>2</sup> or indeed to approve and ratify it,<sup>3</sup> implied that the Speaker claimed to be one with Him Who was the Lord of Moses. "These things understood not His disciples at the first; but after Jesus was glorified,"<sup>4</sup> and the Spirit had been given, it became clear what had been really meant. In the deepest sense of the words, "no man could say that Jesus was the Lord but by the Holy Ghost."<sup>5</sup> When the Spirit of Truth had come, He guided men into all truth as to the Divine Person of Jesus Christ.

These illustrations might be extended. But enough has been said to show that, if the New Testament is to be believed as a whole, our Lord's Own teaching was incomplete; and further, that He knew and meant it to be so. This brings us to the second part of our subject.

## II.

Why was our Lord's Own teaching thus incomplete; incomplete, according to His Own Will and announcement? Why did not He Himself teach all that could properly be called Christian doctrine? Why did He content Himself with laying the foundations of His religion, while He left the building to be finished, according to His Own express appointment and design, by other hands?

The answer is, that the same motive which led Him to teach men at all led Him to impose these limits and restraints upon His teaching. He taught men in their ignorance, because He loved men too well to leave them in darkness. He taught men gradually, and as they were able to bear the strong light of His doctrine, because He loved men too well to shock or blind them by a sudden blaze of truth, for which they were as yet unprepared. He did not judge that if the Christian Creed was placed before men at once in its completeness they would

<sup>1</sup> Rev. v. 6-14.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. v. 33-45.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. 17, 18.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 3.



at once receive it. He knew what was in man.<sup>1</sup> He knew what the prejudices of education, the power of mental habits, the associations of youth, the traditions of a great history, could do to destroy the receptive powers, the moral flexibility of the soul. He was too wise and considerate to expect too much. As the sun does not flash forth in a moment out of the darkness of night, but gives warning of his approach, and then rises gradually, and diffuses a vast body of light before we see him in his full glory above the line of the horizon, so it was with our Lord. The full understanding of Who He was, and what He came to do, was preceded by a twilight; itself His Own work, which brightened more and more, moment by moment, towards the day. He rose amid the mists of imperfect apprehensions and misapprehensions as to Who and What He was; and not until He was high in the heavens did He permit the full truth to break upon the intelligence of the world.

In this He was true to God's providential action in human history. All along God has taught men gradually. The heathen nations have been taught what little truth, amid their errors, they know, by a succession of minds. Each of these was raised up in the providence of God, to advance a single step towards the light; as men who had long lived in darkness could bear. The old Jewish Scriptures are a long series of revelations: the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, the Prophetical. Each is an advance upon its predecessors; and all lead up to the final and complete Revelation of God in Christ. "God, Who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."<sup>2</sup> This unfolding of the Mind of God, gradually throughout the ages, and fully in the last Revelation of Himself which He has made, is based throughout upon God's tender consideration for human weakness. "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now," is inscribed upon every earlier and imperfect revelation; not to depreciate its value, but to explain why it is not fuller than it is; why He Who has spoken is silent a while ere He speaks again.

<sup>1</sup> St. John ii. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. i. 1, 2.



## III.

This leads us to consider, by way of conclusion, two practical lessons.

1. Observe, first, the true principle of a religious education of children or of the uninstructed. To be solid, it should be gradual; it should be given only as the learner's mind becomes acclimatised to the atmosphere of religious truth. Our Lord's tenderness in teaching religious truth was copied by His Apostles. We find in the Epistles<sup>1</sup> the distinction between "babes in Christ," those who were just beginning to learn Christian truth and duty, and "strong" or perfect men, or adults, who had completed, or ought to have completed, their Christian education. To the first was given that elementary form of instruction in Christian doctrine, which, from its easiness of reception, the Apostle terms "milk."<sup>2</sup> To the second, a much more comprehensive instruction in the mysteries of the Christian creed, and in the range of Christian duty, was imparted, and this the Apostle terms "strong meat."<sup>3</sup> This double order of teaching passed into the primitive Church. The catechumens, that is, converts to Christianity who were in the earlier stage of instruction, were treated quite differently from the faithful, who, after Baptism and Communion, were in full fellowship with the whole life and thought of the Church. The catechumens, it was thought, could only bear one kind of spiritual nutriment; the faithful would be satisfied with nothing less than another.

The principle holds good of secular education, and is too much lost sight of in some modern methods. In these days, the old and deeper idea of education as a means of training and exercising the faculties of the mind, so as to enable the educated man to deal with any subject that might come before him in the path of duty, has been abandoned only too largely for the idea of an education which overloads the mind with huge packages of unmastered and unmanageable knowledge, and not seldom leads to frightful cases of intellectual indigestion. Boys are expected to know something about everything; they too often know nothing about anything thoroughly. The consequence is, that while they can talk with striking but unnatural facility on a great many more subjects than boys did forty or

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2; Heb. v. 12-14.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. v. 14.

fifty years ago, their mental faculties are really less braced and sharpened, and their actual capacity for meeting the requirements of life is less considerable than that of their predecessors.

And, in teaching religious truth, parents are sometimes apt to fall into the same mistake. They want to teach everything at once, and they end by really teaching nothing. They forget that most necessary duty of every teacher ; the duty of placing himself, by an effort of sympathy and imagination, as nearly as possible in the mental position of his pupil or child. They think chiefly or only of what interests themselves in religion ; not of what might be interesting or intelligible to minds just opening upon life, and catching with difficulty the horizons of truth and duty which meet the gaze. They are interested in these or those controversies of the day ; they expect their children to be so. They are accustomed to express themselves on religious subjects in such and such abstract phraseology ; they expect their children to understand it. They have arrived at this or that impression as to the heinousness of sin, the preciousness of our Lord's work, the difference between grace and nature, the intimate sense of God's favour which is sometimes bestowed upon holy souls ; they cannot treat their children as other than unregenerate and carnal unless they do so too. What is the consequence ? Either the children are alienated from all religion in later life, owing to the thoughtless but well-meant eagerness with which, without anything to make it living and concrete, without any adequate interpretation, it was thrust on them in youth. Or, they learn that most fatal of all lessons in religion, to talk about it easily, without thinking of what they say ; to allow phrases to outrun meaning and purpose ; and so, in dealing with the most serious of all subjects, to foster a habit of insincerity, which in the event is only too certain to sap the springs of real faith and life.

2. A second lesson is to remember that until our last day God is teaching us, through the action of other minds, through the events of life ; and to be listening for His voice. Each stage of life, up to the very last, leaves some truth untaught. We are daily adding to our experience. We never complete it. As, in the first flush of youth, a young man or woman exults in the sense of animal vitality and of mental buoyancy, Christ, from His throne of mercy and consideration, looks down and says : ' I have many things to say unto thee, young man or

young woman, but thou canst not bear them now.' If He were to teach us all at once ; compressing into one awful and overwhelming lesson all the stern and varied experiences of the future, it would be too much to bear ; too much for our weakness, too much for our proneness to despair. What life is and means as the threshold of eternity ; what is the high and sacred use of disappointment and pain ; why it is better to suffer for doing what is right than to succeed by doing what is wrong ; what the events, the persons, the things of time are worth when compared to the eternal realities : these lessons are only learnt gradually and painfully. Friends die ; health becomes weak ; life forfeits its early promise ; a brilliant spring-tide has issued in an arid summer and a prosaic and darkening autumn. And thus, at each step, the soul is thrown back from the outward and the transient upon the inward and the eternal. Gradually, imperceptibly, one truth leads the way to another : one difficulty, by being surmounted or interpreted, shows the way to explain and master another. It would have seemed impossible beforehand ; but as a fact God teaches all the more surely, because He is so tender, so deliberate, so hesitating, as it seems, in giving His successive lessons. In our early day-dreams we think of the Right Hand and of the Left. But He waits for us by the way to tender the cup of which He drank Himself, and to administer the baptism with which He was baptized.<sup>1</sup>

What can the soul do but breathe the prayer—

“Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
Lead Thou me on ;

Keep Thou my feet ; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene ; one step enough for me ” ?<sup>2</sup>

He has many things to say to us, which we cannot bear as yet. He knows when life's deepest lessons will be most needed by us. We have to listen for His voice, and to take heed that, when we hear, we obey it.

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark x. 37-40.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Newman, *Iraya Apostolica*, No. xxv.

## SERMON XXXVII.

### DIVINE TEACHING GRADUAL.

ST. JOHN XVI. 12.

*I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.*

THE question is sometimes asked why three out of the five Gospels for the Sundays after Easter should be taken from our Lord's last discourse, just before His Passion. Words uttered on the eve of the Agony seem to be out of place on the eve of the Ascension. But the two periods have this in common, that the Divine Speaker is in each case on the eve of a departure. In the discourse in the Supper-Room, the elevation above all that is passing at the moment is so complete, the coming Passion is so lost sight of in the vast survey of an all-embracing purpose, that the language of one period is not unsuited to the circumstances of the other. To exhibit the tranquil superiority to human circumstances which belongs to the Infinite Mind tabernacling in a Human Form was one part of the purpose of St. John's Gospel. In this Evangelist the Crucifixion itself is noticed as a triumph; it is an enthronement of the Incarnate Word, though beneath the canopy of heaven.<sup>1</sup> And the Church follows in the footsteps of St. John when she thus makes selections from his report of our Lord's Words in accordance with the Evangelist's distinctive principle.

#### I.

When our Lord tells His Apostles that He had many things to say to them which they could not as yet bear to hear, He may well have taken them by surprise. They may have thought that a discourse like that in the Supper-Room, on the eve of what they felt to be an approaching crisis, would

<sup>1</sup> St. John xii. 32.

contain the final instructions, exhortations, consolations of their Divine Master. He warns them that there is much still to be told them in a coming time. It would be told them partly during the forty days after His Resurrection ; but, much more, as He proceeds to explain, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, Who was to guide them into all truth.

The subjects on which our Lord did speak with the Apostles during the forty days between His Resurrection and Ascension are hinted at in general terms by St. Luke at the beginning of the Acts. He was "speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> What His kingdom or Church was to be ; what it was not to be ; what laws and rules were to govern it ; how it was to be organised and officered ; what were to be the sources of its life and vigour ; above all, how it was to assist and expand and perfect the spiritual life of single souls. Such-like topics we may dare to infer were handled by our Divine Lord during these solemn days. And the result may be seen in the Apostolic Epistles, especially in those of St. Paul, who would have been told in after years what had passed by some who were present. When in the Epistle to the Corinthians he compares the Church to the human body, we learn that its members were to be many, but its life one.<sup>2</sup> When in the Epistle to the Ephesians he calls it the Body of Christ, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,<sup>3</sup> we see that it was to be no mere voluntary and human association. When he instructs Timothy and Titus how it was to be governed, and ministered to, and provided for,<sup>4</sup> we learn how great a place it was to have in the practical life as well as in the thought of Christians. These features of the Apostolic teaching, passed on by word of mouth from the Eleven to St. Paul, may well have dated from the forty days between the Resurrection and the Ascension.

But it was especially after the descent of the Holy Ghost, and through Him, that our Lord was to say "many things" to His Apostles. "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak : and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me : for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine : therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 3.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.<sup>3</sup> Eph. i. 23.<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 1-15 ; Titus i. 5-9, etc.<sup>5</sup> St. John xvi. 13, 14.

This was to be the illuminating work of the Holy Ghost after the Day of Pentecost. He was to enable the Apostles to understand the real meaning of what they had heard from and observed in their Master while He was on earth. "He shall glorify Me : . . . He shall receive, or take, of Mine, and shall show it unto you." He would make it clear to the Apostles that Jesus Christ, Whom they had followed, and Who was now speaking to them in the Supper-Room, and Who within a few hours would be crucified, was not merely a righteous Man, a Friend of God, the promised Messiah, the Deliverer of Israel, but that He was and is the Eternal Son of God ; that He "is over all, God blessed for ever ;"<sup>1</sup> that when He condescended to be made man, and emptied Himself of His glory, and took on Him a servant's form, and became obedient unto death,<sup>2</sup> neither the weakness of His robe of flesh, nor the sufferings and the shame which He voluntarily bore, nor the ignominious death which seemed for the moment to close his career in failure and in darkness, detracted aught from the dignity of His Eternal Person, from the Majesty of His Divine and unchanging Being. "I have many things to say unto you." It was Jesus Himself Who would speak about Himself, through the teaching of the Spirit. The Spirit "shall not speak of Himself : but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." All that Christ had done and suffered and said, in the days of His flesh, would be suffused with a light from heaven, which would bring out with startling distinctness its real meaning. The world-wide invitations to trust and obey and love ; the great sayings, but half understood when they were uttered, about His Oneness with the Father,<sup>3</sup> His Eternal Existence when Abraham as yet was not,<sup>4</sup> His passing the knowledge of all save the Father, Whom He alone also could really know ;<sup>5</sup> the claim to judge the whole human race from the throne of heaven ;<sup>6</sup> the absolute unhesitating assertion of Self,—so unpardonable if the Speaker was merely human, so inevitable if He was indeed Divine,—all this would be brought to a focus by the teaching, unveiling, systematising Spirit, till the great central truth of Christian Faith, the Absolute Deity of Jesus Christ, as the Everlasting Son of the Father, had stood forth in all its awe and all its beauty in the faith and teaching of the Apostles. And from this central truth how much else would radiate : the infinite

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ix. 5.<sup>2</sup> Phil. ii. 7, 8.<sup>3</sup> St. John x. 30.<sup>4</sup> Ibid. viii. 58.<sup>5</sup> St. Matt. xi. 27.<sup>6</sup> St. John v. 22.



value of His death, incalculable by any merely human estimate ; the virtue of those appointed instruments of contact of His Human Nature with mankind, the Sacraments ; the infallibility of all language that can fairly claim His sanction ; the power to save to the uttermost all who need and claim His help.

And here we see what is to be thought and said about a representation of Christianity which is not seldom to be met with in our day.

True, genuine, original Christianity, as we are sometimes told, is only what was taught by Jesus Christ Himself. All that can be shown to have been uttered by Him deserves the prestige of that great Name. The very Words of Christ, but no words of a follower of Christ, no merely Apostolic words, deserve it. In particular, men have gone on to say, the teaching of St. Paul is something beyond and distinct from the teaching of his Master. It may be Paulinism, and as such, in its degree, interesting. But it is something distinct from, it is an amplification and outgrowth of, pure and original Christianity.

This has a plausible sound ; but we see from the text that it proceeds on an assumption which our Lord Himself would have repudiated, and does condemn. It assumes that He meant to teach the world as of primary and absolute authority, only such truth as fell from His Own blessed Lips. Whereas He says that He has something else to teach it, which He would teach it by His Spirit speaking through others ; that He has "many things" in reserve, which those who heard Him in the days of His flesh could not as yet bear to receive. He has thus made an express provision, it seems, against this particular misapprehension. And we are bound to receive the teaching of His Apostles as His Own teaching ; as the teaching of the Divine Spirit Who was to continue His work after He had left the earth at His Ascension ; as having no less claim upon the faith and consciences of Christians than the Last Discourse or the Sermon on the Mount.

And why did not our Lord teach everything Himself ? Why did He leave many things to be proclaimed in His Name by those who came after Him ? The answer is, because the Apostles "could not bear" this added burden of truth in their earlier days. The reception and assimilation of religious truth is necessarily a very gradual process. In the New Testament it is compared to the erection of a building : St. Paul calls it

edification,<sup>1</sup> or housebuilding. Of the temple of Christian truth in a human soul, Jesus Christ must be the foundation : "other foundation can no man lay."<sup>2</sup> And on this is raised by a wise master-builder, gradually and surely, wall and column, buttress and roof and pinnacle, the fair fabric of doctrine, and moral precepts, till the whole edifice stands out in its ordered beauty. Now as yet the Apostles were not sufficiently prepared for this : "Ye cannot bear these truths now." They were under the strain of great excitement, bordering upon great distress, and this is not a frame of mind in which high and exacting truths can be easily received and have justice done to them. And they were still left to their natural resources : so that the Holy Spirit was needed not only to reveal "many things" to them hereafter, but to enable them to accept the Revelation, and to distinguish it from any products of human fancy or speculation. If truth is to be received, it must be by a state of mind which is to a certain extent in sympathy with it. When this sympathy does not exist, truth will be rejected as foreign to the mind ; as fanciful, unintelligible, even inconceivable. But the work of the Spirit, creating this sympathy, had not yet begun. And therefore, although our Lord had many things to say to the Apostles, He withheld them : "Ye cannot," He said, "bear them now."

## II.

Our Lord's Words apply, again, to the Christian Church. In the Apostles He saw its first representatives ; but His Eye also rested on all the centuries of its coming history ; on our own age not less than on those which have preceded or which will follow it. To the Church He had many things to say, which she could not bear to receive in the days of her infancy.

This does not mean that during all the coming centuries, He would go on adding from time to time new truths to the Christian Creed, by a process of continuous revelation. The faith for which Christians are to contend earnestly was, St. Jude says, once for all delivered to the saints in the age of the Apostles.<sup>3</sup> Later ages might explain what the Apostles had taught. They might unfold and state at length and in

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xiv. 19 ; xv. 2, 20 ; 1 Cor. x. 23 ; xiv. 3, 4, 5, 17 ; 2 Cor. xii. 19 ; xiii. 10 ; Eph. iv. 12, 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 11.

<sup>3</sup> St. Jude 3.

explicit terms what already lay within the Apostles' teaching. This, for instance, is what was done by the great Council which authoritatively adopted the Nicene Creed in order to defend the truth of our Lord's Divinity. But when in that Creed we confess that Jesus Christ our Lord is of one substance with the Father, we do not say more than St. John says in the introduction to his Gospel: "The Word was with God, and the Word was God,"<sup>1</sup> or St. Paul in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, "All things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."<sup>2</sup> In the same way the word "Trinity," expressing the threefold subsistence of the Divine Nature, is not itself found in Scripture. But the Baptismal formula,<sup>3</sup> and many passages in the Apostolic writings, especially in the Epistle to the Ephesians,<sup>4</sup> obviously imply it. If therefore doctrines, having no ground in the teaching of the Apostles, have been added to the faith, in whatever quarter of Christendom, these do not rest on the same basis as explanations or restatements of truths which the Apostles had already taught. They are newly imported and foreign matter, and as such would have been rejected by the early Christian Church. We cannot, therefore, include additional doctrines proposed after the Apostolic age under the head of the "many things" which our Lord had to say to His Church. It is not likely, to say the least, that the holiest and wisest of later divines should know more of His Will than did St. John or St. Paul.

But the Church is a society, and the life of a society, like that of a man, is a history of experience. In the field of experience God is constantly saying new things to the Church as the years roll on. This language of God is uttered in the sequence of events which is ordered by His providence.

Consider the history of our own country. What lessons has God been teaching it during its fifteen centuries! Lessons of order to the England of the Heptarchy; lessons of patience and hope to the England of the Norman kings; lessons of the value of freedom to the England of the Tudors and the Stuarts; lessons of the need of seriousness in life and conviction to the England of the Georges. And surely in our time He is saying many things, stern and tender, to those who have ears to hear, in the events amidst which, day by day, we are living now. He is teaching us that morality should never

<sup>1</sup> St. John i. 1.<sup>2</sup> Col. i. 16, 17.<sup>3</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 19.<sup>4</sup> Eph. i. 3, 6, 13; ii. 18; iii. 14, 16, etc.

be divorced from politics ; that the duties of property rank higher than its undoubted rights ; that races which trifle with the laws of purity are on the road to ruin ; that "righteousness exalteth a nation"<sup>1</sup> much more truly than any financial, or diplomatic, or military success. And much that God teaches us of to-day would have been unintelligible to our ancestors. As we look out on the surface of our national life, on its hopes and fears, on its unsolved, to us apparently insoluble, problems, on its incessant movement, whether of unrest or aspiration, we hear from behind the clouds the more or less distinct announcement of a future which will be at any rate as unlike our present as our past. "I have many things to say unto thee, but thou canst not bear them now."

Look at the history of Israel. Israel was at once a nation and a Church. And its annals are chronicled so fully for this reason, among others : it was to teach us how to look at what is commonly called profane history. Although God gave special privileges to Israel,<sup>2</sup> He is present in the history of all nations. But nations differ from each other, as they do or do not expect to find Him. Each stage in Israel's history had its peculiar lessons : the Exodus, the Wilderness, the Conquest of Canaan, the Anarchy under the Judges, the splendid Monarchy of David and Solomon, the Schism of the Ten Tribes, the Decline and Fall of the royal family of David, the Captivity, the Return, the Persian, the Macedonian, the Herodian periods, the appearance of the Divine Messiah. Nothing could have been antedated with advantage. No prophet could have prophesied before his day, and have been useful, or intelligible. And as each inspired writer passed away, and as each generation was gathered to its fathers, the accents of a Divine voice might have been heard still whispering over the people of Revelation : "I have many things to say unto thee, but thou canst not bear them now."

So with the Church of Christ. In each century of its history God has spoken to it, whether to warn, or encourage, or stimulate, or rebuke. The earlier centuries would not have understood—could not have borne—what He said to the later. The ante-Nicene Church, the Church of the great Councils, the Church of the days of the barbarian conquests, the Church of the schoolmen, the Church of the Reformation period, the Church of the revival of letters, the Church of the nineteenth century,—each has heard, or might have heard,

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xiv. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. ix. 4, 5.

what Christ our Lord, speaking from His throne in heaven, through the urgency of events, has had to tell it. The great teachers of each later age would have been out of place in an earlier day ; while they were indispensable to their own. The second Christian century would not have understood St. Athanasius. The third would have been puzzled with St. Augustine ; the fourth with St. Gregory. The men of the Reformation period would not have entered into either the object or the method of Butler ; and Butler would have felt himself a stranger in much of the Christian thought which is placed before us by some great teachers of our own time.

Will there not be other voices hereafter, for whom we of to-day are as yet unprepared ?

Can we suppose that Christ has said His last word to Christendom ? Are there not features of our religious faith, and of our religious practice, which may prepare us to hear His announcement, " I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now " ?

### III.

Once more, our Lord's Words apply to the life of each individual man ; and especially of each Christian.

The human mind, we all know, has its stages of growth. There is the stage of wonder, in which imagination is the ruling faculty, and in which all that feeds it is welcome. Then comes the stage of awakening reason, when imagination is bidden retire into the background, and everything is scrutinised with an incredulous gaze ; and a young man argues in a rigid technical way, without a ray of doubt as to the perfect trustworthiness of his method. Then perhaps reason, especially if ungoverned by conscience, is tempted to give ear to guilty passion, and to take pleasure, rather than truth or duty, as its teacher and mistress. Finally, if the mental growth be healthy, comes a riper stage, when reason is at once stronger and less imperative. Moral arguments are allowed to weigh against mere dialectics, and a subject is looked at, as we say, all round, and not only or chiefly on its logical side. In short, the mind has acquired all that we mean by balance, whether of the faculties generally, or of the judgment in particular. Now it is plain that the truths and considerations which could be received and appreciated at the last of these stages would be quite unintelligible in the first or second, and that to attempt



to enforce them prematurely would lead to serious consequences. One reason why faith in Christianity has been forfeited by many minds in our day, is that this obvious but serious consideration has been neglected. The minds of boys have been oppressed by problems and questions which as men they would have relegated to their true place in the world of thought, and without damage to the claims of faith or to the sense of intellectual truthfulness.

In the same way, the purely spiritual life of the soul has its stages of experience ; and truths, which are welcome at a later stage, are unintelligible in an earlier one. In the case of those who begin to look at these subjects seriously in adult life, the first stage is almost always that of repentance for past sin. Then the soul understands something of the meaning of moral evil, of the severe and necessary Holiness of God, of the Atoning Work of Jesus, from Whom the penitent claims a new robe of righteousness, and Whose absolving words open a new era in his existence. Then comes the stage of spiritual illumination, when the wider horizons of revealed truth are gradually opened out to the soul's delighted gaze. First one and then another district of the Divine Mind is explored, and the Christian is as glad of the Word of God as one that findeth great spoils.<sup>1</sup> And then a higher stage beyond is that of union with God, in and through union with our Lord Jesus Christ ; a union claimed by faith, riveted by Sacraments, but deepened, realised, rejoiced in by a new sense granted to the penitent and illuminated soul, which at these heights learns to say, as very few of us ever can dare to say it, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His."<sup>2</sup> Now, here again the truths which are appropriate to the higher stages would be unintelligible to those below. The second stage might term the language of the highest strained and mystical ; and the first stage would account the second speculative or imaginative ; while those who had yet to enter on the first,—the stage of penitence,—would probably say that it implied a morbid view of life and conduct, with which they could not sympathise. Yet He Who made and has redeemed us, and Who knows our needs and shortcomings before we tell Him, would whisper to each of these critics—"I have many things to say unto thee, but thou canst not bear them now."

And this may enable us to understand a feature of the system of the early Christian Church, which has often been commented

<sup>1</sup> Ps. cxix. 162.

<sup>2</sup> Song of Solomon ii. 16.



on unfavourably, from lack of due knowledge or consideration. I refer to the gradual way in which converts to Christianity were instructed in the truths of the Christian faith. Before a man was received into full discipleship, and made the vows and received the grace of baptism, a period of preparation was insisted on, which lasted from two to three years. This delay was intended partly to test the sincerity of his obedience ; but, still more, to instruct him gradually, and so thoroughly, in the revealed truths of Christianity. In the whole of this preparatory stage a man was called a Catechumen, and the teaching which he received Catechetical. For he was constantly examined, in order to find out how far he was grounded in the faith of Christ, or in the lines of thought which lead up to its sincere reception. The instruction generally began with those truths which we may learn from natural reason, such as the Being of God, or the law of conscience, or the immortality of the soul ; and then it went on gradually to the distinctive doctrines and Mysteries of the Gospel. Thus at first the convert to Christianity was called a *hearer*. He was allowed to attend instructions and the reading of Holy Scripture. Then, at a second stage, he was permitted to remain during public prayers, and was termed a *worshipper*. Afterwards, as the time of his baptism drew near, he was taught the Lord's Prayer and the Creed,—the peculiar treasures, as they were thought in the early Church, of the regenerate,—and then he was described as *elect*, or *competent*. After baptism he was fully instructed in the deeper aspects of the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and Incarnation of our Lord, and of the One Sacrifice which was made by Christ upon the Cross, and which is presented to God the Father in the Holy Eucharist. But these great and overwhelming truths were withheld until he had been grounded in the lessons which led up to them and made their sincere and intelligent reception possible.

Now this system of graduated teaching had its roots and sanction in Holy Scripture, and was at least begun under the eyes of the Apostles. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians St. Paul distinguishes between the natural or imperfect and the established or perfect Christian. Christianity, he contends, contains that true and profound philosophy after which the sages of the heathen world, with their fragmentary and tentative systems, were vainly seeking ;<sup>1</sup> but if a man would understand this, he must “become a fool that he may be wise ;”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iii. 18.

he must undergo a disciplinary and progressive training, if he would listen to the Apostles "speaking the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which none of the princes of this world knew."<sup>1</sup> And then he goes on to tell the Corinthians, that he "could not speak unto them as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you," he says, "with milk"—that is, with elementary truth—"and not with meat"—that is, with a fuller measure of truth—"for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."<sup>2</sup> In the Epistle to the Hebrews we find the same distinction between the doctrines which are suitable for the weak and ignorant, and those which a regenerate Christian might understand. When the inspired writer is about to speak of the great truths of our Lord and Saviour's Priesthood which were taught under the typical history of Melchizedek, he suddenly checks himself, remembering that some of his readers have not sufficiently advanced in Christian teaching to understand him. "We have many things to say," he observes, "and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time that has passed ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even to those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil."<sup>3</sup> Here, under the same figure of different kinds of food for the body, the difference of doctrine which the soul can receive at different stages of Christian instruction is very vividly taught us: and we see in this language the sanction for the discipline of the succeeding age, to which allusion has already been made. Nay rather, the system is to be referred, for its principle, to the example of the Teacher of teachers, our Lord Himself. What were His parables but an appeal to imagination? what was the explanation of the parables but a call for the first action of the reason? what were His longer discourses but a training of the aroused reason to move reverently and wisely among the things of faith? So again, first the Sermon on the Mount makes the conscience sensitive and true; then the sermon at Capernaum or the parables of the kingdom introduce the soul to many new and awful truths; and, lastly, the dis-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iii. 1, 2.<sup>3</sup> Heb. v. 11-14.

course in the Supper-room teaches, among other things, union with the Father and the Son, through the Spirit; that great gift of an inward Presence, which is the consummation of the Christian life. Our Lord did not begin with the Last Discourse. He taught as men were able to bear His teaching.

Once more, are we not here reminded of the true method of educating children in religious truth? A careful mother or teacher will treat a child's mind with great tenderness and reverence. She will be careful to excite interest before gratifying it; and to gratify it in such degree as her child's capacities may admit. She will not think of the mind of her child as of a large bag, into which all the odds and ends of knowledge that are swept up from the table of common life may be thrown at random, but as a delicate and beautiful organism, to be handled with tenderness and respect, since one mistake in dealing with it may be fatal. A well-known writer has told us how she was taught by her mother the Nature and Attributes of God. "I asked her one day who God was, and was told to come again the next day, and at the same hour. I came, and repeated the question, 'Who is God?' and was again told to wait another day before I could be answered. And then, when my curiosity had been raised to the highest pitch, and my sense of the importance of the subject immensely enhanced by this repeated postponement of an answer, I came once more, and my mother explained, in words which I have never forgotten, how Great and Awful and Beautiful a Being God is; and what He has told us about His Attributes, and His relations to the world and to us, and all this in simple words, and so far as a child's mind could bear it."<sup>1</sup> Certainly such a lesson as that no child was likely to forget.

And lastly, this line of thought suggests the solemn interest of life. May not each of us have to learn something from the Great Teacher before the end comes, which we could not learn now? That which invests the life of a child with such pathos is the thought of all that it may have to go through before it dies. Our Lord bends over it in His tenderness, and bids it take its fill of joy, while yet it may. The day will perhaps come when He will say many things to it, under the discipline of sorrow and disappointment, which it could not bear now. There is a striking picture of Louis the Sixteenth and Marie Antoinette at their coronation. As yet all seems

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Schimmelpenninck; quoted from memory.

as bright as a great position and the smiles of friends, and splendid prospects, could make it; the young couple are scarcely more than children; it is the still unclouded morning of a summer's day. "I have many things to say unto thee" might well have been the motto of each of those young lives. As yet the years of deepening anxiety, the incapacity for dealing with stern times, the piteous indecision, the betrayal by trusted advisers, the hastened flight, the enforced return, the trial, the imprisonment in the Temple, the scaffold, are unsuspected. Each stage of suffering brought with it a lesson which might never otherwise have been learnt; but the lesson could not have been borne had it been given before its time. Many a man who dies quietly in his bed is in reality much more to be pitied than that King and Queen of France, as the sharp edge of the guillotine ushered them into the Presence beyond the veil.

Doubtless the future is veiled from us for other reasons; but especially as an accommodation to our real needs and capacities. Our "time is in His Hand,"<sup>1</sup> Who "knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust."<sup>2</sup> And few prayers will be more welcome to the soul that dwells constantly on this solemn truth than the Psalmist's: "Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me: for Thou art the God of my salvation: in Thee hath been my hope all the day long."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxi. 17.<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ciii. 14.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. xxv. 4.

## SERMON XXXVIII.

### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RISEN LIFE.

ROM. vi 5.

*If we have been planted together in the likeness of His Death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection.*

THE Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is apt, in our days, to be considered mainly from one point of view, suggested by the proof which it affords of the claims of our Lord's Person and mission, in other words, of the truth of the Christian faith. When doubt is in the air, Christians naturally look about them for the best reason to give for the hope that is in them;<sup>1</sup> and no reason that can be given for the claim of the Christian revelation to unveil the mind of God is more certain as a matter of fact, or so convincing to the majority of fair and thoughtful minds, as is the Resurrection of our Saviour from the dead. He Himself pointed to it before He suffered as the sign that He was what He claimed to be, as the certificate which He would give to the world that He had come from God.<sup>2</sup> And when He had risen, His Apostles rested their whole case upon it, as being the foundation-fact of the Creed which they undertook to proclaim to the nations of the earth. In the first years of Christianity, as at this moment, the religion which we Christians profess must ever answer with its life for the literal truth of our Lord's Resurrection. St. Paul has said it; "If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, your faith is also vain."<sup>3</sup> The importance of this consideration cannot be exaggerated; and we may not wonder that of late the evidential value of the Resurrection should have occupied a first place in the minds of men.

There is a second aspect of the Resurrection, which, as life goes on, appeals to the older among us with ever-increasing

<sup>1</sup> 1 St. Pet. iii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> St. John ii. 18-22.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 14.



force—I mean the guidance, the support, the comfort it affords us in our thoughts about the dead. Each year as it passes reduces the number of the friends of our youth, until by far the larger part of them have passed out of our sight, and are somewhere in the world beyond the grave. There they are—the old people of a former generation who were kind to us as children, the grown-up people to whom we were related, father and mother, and aunts and uncles; there they are, our own contemporaries, perhaps a wife or a husband, a brother or a sister, schoolfellows, college friends, partners, associates, rivals in the struggle of life; or even—and this comes home to us more closely—those who belong to the generation below us—our children, our nephews and nieces, young people whom we might have expected to take our place when we have gone, and who have preceded us in the last momentous journey. What are we to think of them? what at any rate may we think about those of them who have lived, according to their knowledge and opportunities, for another world? Let us take to heart that saying of the Apostle—“If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.”<sup>1</sup> Yes! we shall see them again—those loved ones, when our time of probation has passed, and when their and our time of waiting and preparation beyond the tomb has ended; we shall see them again, in the old form—only touched with an immortal brightness—somewhere in the courts of the palace of the Eternal Christ.

But the Apostle has another lesson to bring before us in relation to the Resurrection: he would have us consider it, not as the warrant of our faith, not as the solace of our wounded hearts, but as the model, the type, the mould of our life and character. The likeness of His Resurrection! What does he mean by it? How can you and I be like anything so preternatural? What resemblance is possible for us to this bursting forth of a human body from the tomb in which men had laid it into the upper air of light and freedom?

Now, one answer to this question may be that at the general resurrection at the last day the bodies of Christians will rise, just as our Lord rose, from the humiliation of the grave to a life of glory. This is, undoubtedly, true; but the future resurrection is not the resurrection of which St. Paul is here thinking. He is thinking of a resurrection of the soul or character; and he says that this resurrection is to be modelled

<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. iv. 14.



on that of our Lord. At first sight it is not clear to us how an internal spiritual process can be a copy of, or have resemblance to, an event outside us and palpable to the senses; and yet he plainly means that the spiritual may correspond to the outward world more nearly than we think; and that, not only to the apprehension of religious fancy, but in a real sense which may be a matter of observation and experiment.

St. Paul will have it that each of the great events of the earthly manifestation of the Redeemer is reproduced in the life of the Christian; and, in particular, that as the Christian is crucified with Christ, and buried with Christ, so especially he rises with Christ, and his risen life, in the ratio of its moral reality, corresponds to the Resurrection life of our Lord and Saviour. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection."

Already I seem to hear the condemnatory word—Mysticism—a word which at once puts the subject to which it is affixed beyond the pale of an Englishman's sympathy and intelligence. And, indeed, this is not always an undeserved ban. There is mysticism and mysticism: a bad and unfruitful mysticism, and a mysticism for which the Apostles themselves are responsible. When a subject, in itself sufficiently clear and plain, is, whether from mental haziness or from lack of courage to say simply what is true, enveloped in a fog of verbiage, pious in its general drift and colouring, yet conveying to the hearer no one truth so distinctly that he can grasp and make it his own—this is, indeed, a deplorable sort of mysticism, if, indeed, it ought not to be described by another name. But when action or language has a secondary meaning which does not appear upon the face of it, or which belongs to a sphere other than that in which it is uttered or takes place, to insist on this meaning is a very legitimate and, indeed, an inevitable kind of mysticism, and we need not be frightened at the word when we cannot honestly reject or avoid that which it describes. Thus, Holy Scripture has a second or mystical sense over and above that which the letter conveys—such, for instance, as St. Paul, writing to the Galatians, traces in the history of Sarah and Hagar;<sup>1</sup> and the Holy Sacraments are mystical actions—that is, they mean a great deal more than the outward rite brings before the eye. And the Death and Burial and Resurrection of our Lord have a mystical side or aspect over and above their transcendent value as events in the

<sup>1</sup> Gal. iv 22-31.

world's history ; they point to, and indeed they are the operative causes of, corresponding actions within the soul of man. The true Christian, too, here in this life, is crucified with Christ ; here in this life he is buried with Christ ; here, before his body dies, he rises with Christ. Call this mysticism if you will ; it is a good mysticism. It bears two certificates on its front—the certificate of Apostolic authority, and the certificate of Christian experience.

St. Paul will have it that a Christian must die—be crucified—with Christ. He says of himself, “ I am crucified with Christ ; ”<sup>1</sup> and associating himself with his brethren, he writes, “ Our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”<sup>2</sup> Here we see what he means. That mass of undisciplined desires and passions, which is the governing body in the life of man in a state of nature, or in a Christian who has fallen from grace, and which the Apostle calls the body of sin, has to be put to death before any progress can be made in the true life of man. This body of sin must not do what it would ; its hands must be nailed to a cross. It must not go whither it would ; its feet must be nailed to a cross. It must linger on that cross, to which the Divine Will would fain attach it, until it dies ; and then it must be buried out of sight, so as to have no further contact with the world in which it lived and worked its will in days gone by.

This is the likeness of the death of Christ ; and St. Paul assumes that his readers have been “ planted together ” with it ; that they have become as closely united to it as a graft becomes with its parent stock. This crucifixion of the old man, of the whole collection of untamed thoughts and lusts, would have taken place, in those first days of Christianity, so far as was possible, before an adult convert to the Christian faith was baptised ; during the anxious and careful preparation which preceded the reception of that sacrament. The first thing required of adult candidates for baptism was “ repentance whereby they forsake sin ; ”<sup>3</sup> and the sincerity of this repentance was proved by a willingness to “ crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin.”<sup>4</sup>

This death to sin must be, not a fainting fit or a swoon, but a real passing out of life.

No one has ever denied that Jesus Christ was crucified ; and

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Rom vi. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Church Catechism.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Service of ‘ Public Baptism of Infants,’ Book of Common Prayer.

until it became an object to deny the truth of the Resurrection, no one ever denied that upon the cross Jesus Christ actually died. It is true that a large number of sufferers have lingered long on the cross than He did ; and Pilate, who was accustomed to witness or review the details of executions, was surprised at receiving the news of His death after so short a lapse of time.<sup>1</sup> But the exhaustion which our Lord had suffered during the preceding night would sufficiently account for what took place, and, even if His side had not been pierced with a spear, the report of the Roman officer in charge might have been relied on as being, for practical purposes, quite as trustworthy an authority as that of a scientific expert, had one such been there. Had Joseph of Arimathæa conceived the design of removing Jesus Christ from the cross before death had taken place, and then, after burying Him for a few hours, of conveying Him away by night to Galilee, he would have had more difficulties with the Roman guard than modern advocates of this suggestion appear to imagine ; while nothing is less conceivable than that a devoted disciple should have lent himself to a plot which, if it had been successful, would have utterly destroyed his Master's claim upon his own veneration, by falsifying the very prediction to which He had appealed as the sign of His mission.

Jesus, then, really died upon the Cross ; and St. Paul insisted on a real death to sin in the convert to Christianity. Of this the Apostle traced a token in the ceremony, at that time universal, of baptism by immersion. The baptismal waters were the grave of the old nature ; while through these waters Christ bestowed the gift of the new.<sup>2</sup> As Jesus, crucified and dead, was laid in His grave by Joseph of Arimathæa, so the Christian, crucified to the world through the Body of Christ, descended, as into a tomb, into the baptismal waters ; he was buried beneath them ; they closed, for the moment, over him ; he was planted, St. Paul would have said, into the likeness not only of Christ's death, but of His burial. But the immersion was over ; the Christian was lifted from the flood. This was as evidently correspondent to the Resurrection of Christ as the descent had been to the Burial. "Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him."<sup>3</sup> Or, as in the text, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His Death, we shall be also in the likeness of His Resurrection." "The likeness of His Resurrection." It cannot mean only or chiefly a corresponding act to that of our Lord rising from the

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark xv. 44.<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 3, 4.<sup>3</sup> Col. ii. 12.

dead ; together with, and beyond this, it must mean some correspondence with His Risen Life—in its relation to the past ; in its present characteristics ; in its anticipation of the future.

# I.

The first point of likeness between a true Christian life and the life of our Risen Lord relates to the past. Each has experienced a resurrection ; and, if the likeness be a true one, the resurrection in each case is real.

When our Lord rose from the grave, He took leave of death for good and all. He held, as He Himself says, the keys of death ;<sup>1</sup> instead of being mastered by death, He conquered and controlled it. And thus, exclaims St. Paul, "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more : death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once ; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God."<sup>2</sup> Here note the difference between the Resurrection of our Lord and the resurrection, for example, of Lazarus. Lazarus had been in the grave for four days when he was summoned by Jesus Christ to return to life. It is said—I do not vouch for the entire accuracy of the account—that Lazarus lived for thirty years subsequently, and died at the age of sixty, after preaching the Gospel in the south of France. That he was present at an entertainment after his return to life is certain ; that he lived for some considerable time is more than probable. And there is another thing related about him of which this at any rate may be said, that it is very true to human nature. It is reported that when he returned to life his first question was whether he would have to die again, and that, on being told that he was still subject to the common doom of men, he was never more seen to smile. Now, this was the very point of St. Paul's triumphant exclamation, that "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more : death hath no more dominion over Him." Our Lord had done for good and all with death ; and the inexhaustible ingenuity of objectors has never, so far as I know, in any age pretended that, after leaving the grave on Easter morning, He was again committed to it.

And, let us be sure of it, a Christian life, which is planted in the likeness of Christ's Resurrection, will resemble it in its freedom from relapses into the realm of death.

Sin is the tomb of the soul ; and to have risen from this

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 9, 10.

tomb ought to mean that we do not return to it. "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more. . . . Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,"<sup>1</sup> This is the rule of a Christian life ; it has risen from the grave of sin for good and all.

Not that St. Paul would have us believe that a baptised or converted man cannot sin if he would ; that the return to sin is as literally impossible for him as the return to the sepulchre in the garden was for the risen Christ. That supposition has, indeed, been put forward as a Christian truth, but not on Apostolic authority. St. Paul knows nothing of any modern theory of indefectible grace—of grace which so controls the action of the will as to destroy its freedom. On the contrary, while he writes of himself, "By the grace of God I am what I am,"<sup>2</sup> he also describes his anxiety, "lest after that I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."<sup>3</sup> There is no absolute impossibility in the relapse of a regenerate Christian into moral and spiritual death ; but there should be the strongest moral probability against anything of the kind. The strength which has been given him warrants him in reckoning himself to be "dead indeed unto sin ;"<sup>4</sup> although he still may be, as the Apostle puts it, "overtaken in a fault"<sup>5</sup>—or may, after being "enlightened and tasting of the heavenly gift," so fall away that the difficulty of "renewing him again to repentance"<sup>6</sup> is well-nigh insuperable. Still, as has been said, in the Apostle's judgment such a catastrophe should be looked upon as being, what in Apostolic days it was, a rare exception. The rule is that the Christian is like Christ ; raised from the death of sin, he dieth no more.

What is the case with a large number of Christians nowadays—with ourselves ? So far are some of us from "dying no more," that we might almost seem to sink down into the tomb at regular intervals. It is said that, under the influence of the great teachers who two centuries ago were admitted to the pulpit of the chapel at Versailles, in Lent, the most powerful of the Kings of France broke off his debaucheries during the days of penitence, but only to relapse into them again after Easter. But if this was the case, it might unhappily be paralleled in humbler lives nearer home. The rays of that fierce light which beats upon a throne are often so pointed by the

<sup>1</sup> Rom. vi. 9-11.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 10.<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ix. 27.<sup>4</sup> Rom. vi. 11<sup>5</sup> Gal. vi. 1.<sup>6</sup> Heb. vi. 4, 6.



hand of envy as to make more of the vices than of the virtues of the rulers of mankind ; but the absence of this relentless publicity too often implies the absence of a safeguard, such as it is, against what is wrong. St. Peter was thinking of humble people who had once done better when he quoted the proverb that the "dog had returned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."<sup>1</sup>

One predisposing cause of these relapses, of which sufficient account is often not taken, is the empire of habit. Habit is a chain which attaches us with subtle power to the past, whether it be good or evil. It is linked on to the movements of the understanding, to the impulses of the affections, and especially to the action of the will. It is in alliance with circumstances, with persons, with all that acts upon memory and association, with particular places, with states of weather, with tones of voice, with features, with gestures—with all that is apparently trifling and incidental. It was meant by our Creator to be the most powerful support of the life of virtue and grace in the soul of man. But when the soul has been enchained by sin, habit is enlisted in the service of sin, and promotes a return to the grave of sin, even after the soul's resurrection through penitence to the life of grace. And do we not too often invite the ruinous reappearance of old habits by haunting the tomb from which we have risen ; by playing with the bandages and the apparatus of death ; by visiting old haunts, reading old books, encouraging old imaginations that are fatally linked with the debasement of the past ? "How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein ? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised unto Jesus Christ were baptised unto His death ? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death ; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."<sup>2</sup> Surely we cannot dally with the ancient enemy ; we cannot risk the reassertion of the power of those habits of which we had broken the chains ; we cannot forget that at our moral resurrection the whole force of habit was to be transferred to the account of the life of grace. The Christian, like Christ, being raised from the dead, was to die no more ; and the spiritual death which sin involves was to have no more dominion over him.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 St. Pet. ii. 22.<sup>2</sup> Rom. vi. 2-4.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 8, 9.



## II.

But what were the characteristics of our Lord's Risen Life as regards the present ?

Of these one which immediately arrests attention was that the greater part of it was hidden from the eyes of men. During the forty days which elapsed between His Resurrection and His Ascension into heaven He is recorded to have appeared altogether only eleven times, and of these appearances five took place on the day of His rising from the grave. Generally speaking, too, these appearances were of short duration. If we make the most of St. Luke's statement in the Acts of the Apostles, that our Lord, after His Resurrection, was seen of the Apostles whom He had chosen forty days,<sup>1</sup> this may certainly imply that there were more appearances than those which are recorded. But it does not mean that our Lord was continuously with the Apostles ; it does not destroy the intermittent character of His appearances ; it only marks the period of time throughout which they took place.

In this respect there is, no doubt, a contrast between our Lord's Life before and after His Death and Resurrection. Before these events, and from the date of His entrance upon His ministry, He lived, with but rare exceptions, before the eyes of His disciples. Now and then He set apart a night or a few hours for retirement, in which He might hold communion with the Father in prayer, on some mountain-top, or in some secluded spot near the scene of His labours. But after the Resurrection this retirement was not the exception, it was the rule ; and His appearances to His disciples were so many suspensions of it.

Now, a Christian life that is planted in the likeness of Christ's Resurrection will be, to a great extent, withdrawn from the eyes of men. The unseen element in it will be larger than the seen ; the part of which God only takes account larger than that which can be measured by man. A Christian must, indeed, let his light so shine before men that they may see his good works, and glorify his Father Which is in heaven.<sup>2</sup> But he must also take care that the motive of improving others is subordinate to that of doing what he does for the glory of God, since otherwise " he has no reward of his Father Which is in heaven."<sup>3</sup> In any case, the life of private prayer and

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> St. Matt. v. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. vi. 1.

self-discipline—the life of motive and intention—the life of faith, hope, love, and contrition—must altogether preponderate in a true Christian's career over his external activities, and if it does it will thereby promote those activities. The forest tree, ere it raises its branches towards the skies, strikes its roots deep and far into the soil beneath ; and an active Christian life which is not rooted in devotion to an unseen Creator and Redeemer will speedily degenerate into the life of a philanthropic machine, looking for its reward to imposing statistics, and florid newspaper reports, and the applause of public meetings, and generally the praise of men.

My friends, publicity is the order of our day ; it is a characteristic of life in this age on a scale to which, as I believe, there is no earlier parallel in human history. The distinctive triumphs of our modern civilisation tend to increase the publicity of life ; the press, the railway, the telegraph, conspire to oblige men to live before the eyes of their fellows. Everybody is observed, discussed, interviewed, photographed so minutely and persistently that not merely monarchs and rulers in Church and State, but those of us who in bygone days would have lived and died in what was then accurately called a private station are exhibited to the public view with such persistent eagerness that a private station can scarcely be said to exist. No doubt this publicity has one good side : it may supply motives for virtue and against wrong-doing in some quarters where none of a higher order are recognised. But who can doubt that it tends to impair, if not to destroy, that disinterestedness—that superiority to merely human approbation—which is the very bloom and lustre of the higher Christian life ; that it tends to make the world's standard of excellence the standard also of the servants of Christ ; that it leads men to grudge the time and the efforts of which no human eye can take account, and which were offered to Him That seeth in secret<sup>1</sup> by our fathers in the faith ; that, in short, it impairs that note of likeness to Christ in His Resurrection, which the Apostle would fain see in all His spiritual children—a “life hidden with Christ in God.”<sup>2</sup>

It was the sense of this truth which was the strength of monasticism : monasticism was a protest against the idea that the life of the Risen Christ could be shared by men who had no eye for the value of much secret communion with God. Like other human efforts to give practical expression to a

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. vi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 3.

religious truth, it may have made its full share of mistakes, but the truth which men like St. Benedict had in view remains for ever in the text of the Gospel. A life lived wholly before the eyes of men, and lived too probably with a view to the approval of men, can hardly be in "the likeness of Christ's Resurrection."

But there was another note of our Lord's Risen Life which we cannot fail to notice. When He did appear to His Apostles it was not casually or purposelessly. He had a distinct motive for each separate appearance. He had a lesson to teach; a warning, an encouragement, a grace or blessing to convey, as the reason for each separate act of contact with the human beings around Him. Consider the accounts of His interviews with Mary Magdalene;<sup>1</sup> with the holy women;<sup>2</sup> with the two disciples on the Emmaus road;<sup>3</sup> with the ten and the eleven in the upper chamber;<sup>4</sup> with the five hundred in Galilee;<sup>5</sup> with the fishers at the sea of Tiberias.<sup>6</sup> Nothing is conventional, nothing perfunctory, nothing meaningless—it were almost profane to add—nothing insincere. Each interview does a separate work which had to be done, and with a point and thoroughness which we cannot mistake.

This feature of our Lord's Risen Life belongs indeed to His whole ministry, but the very occasional character of His appearances during the forty days gives it a new prominence. And here, must we not admit that we modern Christians are very unlike Him? How very little of our intercourse with each other has a motive which raises it above a conventional or selfish level! There are many reasons for this. Sometimes it is timidity; sometimes it is the absence of any strong and clear conviction of any kind as to the lines of truth and the lines of duty; sometimes it is the more respectable dread of appearing to take too much on ourselves—the dread of being didactic or troublesome. But as a consequence our social life often resembles those story-books whose aim it is to excite continuous amusement in the reader, and yet not to have any discoverable moral attached to them.

We shrink from speaking the "word in season"<sup>7</sup> and from giving "a reason for the hope that is in us."<sup>8</sup> Can we wholly escape responsibility for the consequences of our silence; for the downward career; for the darkened or dying faith of those

<sup>1</sup> St. John xx. 11-17.    <sup>2</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 9, 10    <sup>3</sup> St. Luke xxiv. 13-31.

<sup>4</sup> St. John xx. 19-23; 26-29.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 6.

<sup>6</sup> St. John xxi. 1-22.

<sup>7</sup> Isa. l. 4.

<sup>8</sup> 1 St. Pet. iii. 15.

with whom we may have come into contact? When our Lord met His Apostles after His Resurrection He spoke "of things concerning the kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> He laid in these brief interviews the foundations on which was reared His Universal Church, with its creed, its constitution, its settled methods of polity and working. "You may have forgotten an interview which we had"—so said a stranger once to an older friend—"twenty years ago. At the time I did not thank you for what you said; but I must tell you now that, under God, I owe you my soul."

### III.

Once more, our Lord's Risen Life was passed in anticipation of the event which was to close it. That life of expectation did not last long—a short six weeks, and all was over.

Perhaps some of us know what it is to be looking out for that which must come soon, but the date of which is uncertain. Every autumn we see the swallows gather on our roofs, review their forces, disperse, collect again—appear to be on the point of departure, then again hesitate, before they take leave of us. And in a last illness, what alternations there are from day to day of hope and fear, of increasing weakness and apparently returning vigour, of the lights which flicker and the shadows which darken in the dim atmosphere of the sick-room before the end—long foreseen—comes. Read the account of the preparation for Elijah's departure;<sup>2</sup> the anxious, affectionate misgivings with which the great prophet was followed by a band of young disciples, who dreaded while they anticipated his removal from among them.

But what withdrawal of friend or teacher could ever compare with that which took place at the Ascension? How tenderly our Lord breaks it to His disciples in His last discourse. "A little while and ye shall not see Me; and again a little while and ye shall see Me; and because I go to the Father."<sup>3</sup> And when He had risen—He was in full expectation of it; forgetting the sepulchre which was behind, and reaching forward to the mount of the Ascension which was before Him.

So should it be with us. "Here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."<sup>4</sup> "We look not for the things

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings ii. 1-11.

<sup>3</sup> St. John xvi. 16.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xiii. 14.

that are seen, but for the things that are not seen ; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.”<sup>1</sup> “We are strangers and pilgrims upon earth.”<sup>2</sup> “Our light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”<sup>3</sup> “This I say, brethren, the time is short ; it remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none.”<sup>4</sup> “The fashion of this world passeth away.”<sup>5</sup> All this is but an application in detail of the language of our Divine Master—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where rust and moth doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal ; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”<sup>6</sup> It is the language of men who sit easily to the present life ; who look on it from many points of view, but as being before all things transitory ; who fear to become entangled in its attractions ; and are perpetually preparing, and inducing others to prepare, to leave it. It is the language of men who look to the future as becomes those who are planted in the likeness of Christ’s Resurrection.

[Man has at all times been more or less enslaved by his senses ; he never was more so than in our day. We all feel the presence of those powers of thought which in their extreme development become secularism ; and which, treating this life as a certainty, and the life to come as at best a matter of speculation, would make the most of the passing years, while taking no heed of what may follow them. If, indeed, it were ascertained that there is no hereafter, this would be a very sensible proceeding. It would be the common sense of life, if the human conscience carried within it no evidence of man’s immortality, and if our Lord’s Body had rotted in His grave. From this enslavement to the world of sense and matter nothing can emancipate us like union in spirit with our Risen Lord ; if we live in and with Him, we look forward, as He did throughout His Risen Life on earth, to the time of departure which is to close it. For His Resurrection has broken the bonds of sense and has set the mind and the will of man free to take the true measure of human destiny. The true Christian lives as it were, on the wing—ready to fly away and be at rest.]

It is in the triumphant experience of this Risen Life that we find one of the chief glories of Easter Day. On tomb after tomb in the crypt beneath your feet you read the words, Here

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 18.<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 13.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 17.<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. vii. 29.<sup>5</sup> Ibid. 31.<sup>6</sup> St. Matt. vi. 19, 20.



lieth the body—of this great general, of that accomplished artist, of this distinguished man of letters, of that pious ecclesiastic. Here lies his body. However celebrated he was in life, whatever art may have done for the beauty of his monument, or eloquence for the epitaph which it bears—still, here lies his body—and until the last trump shall sound no power can avail to raise it from the dust. But at the open tomb of Jesus sits the angel with the spoken epitaph—“He is not here ; He is risen.”<sup>1</sup> Earthly greatness, as a rule, ends with the grave. May we not almost say that the greatness of Jesus on earth begins with it ? Why should it not be so in the life of our spirits ?

We have done, or should have done, with the tomb of sin, for good and all. We have to live lives, hidden with Christ in God,<sup>2</sup> but manifested to the world so far as our duty to others may require. And we are or should be men of the future : our eyes should look beyond the furthest horizons of time, and be fixed on the outline of the eternal hills. When this new life is once planted in the soul, old things have passed away ; behold, all things have become new.<sup>3</sup> As the Spouse says in the Canticles, “The winter is past ; . . . the time of the singing of birds is come ; . . . arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.”<sup>4</sup> Life melts into the world beyond the grave, by a natural process, in which death is an incident rather than an interruption, and the Christian’s Easter on earth is but a rehearsal for that never-ending festival which they keep in heaven.

<sup>1</sup> St. Matt. xxviii. 6.<sup>2</sup> Col. iii. 3.<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 17.<sup>4</sup> Song of Solomon ii. 11-13.





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